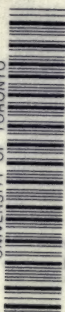


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00666885 9

HERSELF

E. SIDGWICK

HERSELF

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PROMISE.
LE GENTLEMAN.

THACKERAY'S
THE ROSE AND THE
RING

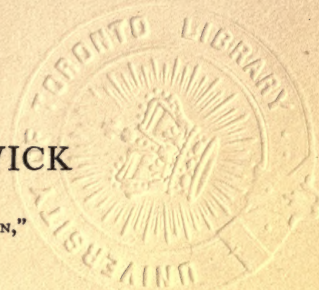
Dramatised in Two Acts.
A Play for Schools.

35651

HERSELF

BY
ETHEL SIDGWICK

AUTHOR OF
"PROMISE," "LE GENTLEMAN,"
&c.



162906.

8.6.21.

LONDON
SIDGWICK & JACKSON LTD.
3 ADAM STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.

1912

PR
6037
I35H4

All Rights Reserved

*Entered at the Library of Congress
Washington, U.S.A.*

First Impression, March, 1912

Second Impression, April, 1912

Third Impression, May, 1912

PART I
VERSAILLES

I

A FAST-DARKENING December day, and a little Englishwoman the solitary figure on a vast and melancholy stage, the royal gardens of Versailles. The note of the scene was faded splendour : above, where the winter sunset died strangled among level clouds, with barely an effort for life, still less for beauty : below, where long-accumulated damp dripped from the trees on ranks of statue and fountain,—frivolous, beautiful, profane; and all of wasteful marble. They looked piteous enough, those fair, half-clad shapes of nymph and goddess, seeming to shrink for mere comfort into the shelter of the serried woods. They needed encouragement in these dull democratic times to flaunt as they had of old, and encouragement they had none. Their customary admirers passed them by, lifting the furs about their chins or turning up the collars of their coats, as they hurried homeward from their afternoon's occupation, an inspection of the half-frozen lake. The splendours of Louis Quatorze's waterworks were good for naught, in these worthy folks' opinion, if not to give them skating ; and in the late contention of cold and rain, rain had still too evidently the upper hand.

'Tant pis,' muttered the mondaines of Versailles ;

and turned their practical minds to cakes and tea, and the streets gaily lighted for Christmas week which twinkled to them from afar.

Meanwhile the little Englishwoman, abandoned by all, stood breathless in a glade, and addressed the mistletoe above her head, which for twenty minutes past she had been manœuvring to reach.

‘Very well,’ she soliloquised. ‘You think you have got the better of me, being the last thing I tried for this day, and left me wanting all. But, think as you will, I’ll not spend a penny to buy you in the street. You’re no use at all, you’re nothing but green-and-white sentiment, and bought in a market you’re not even that. If I had torn you with my hands, I might have liked it, but it would not have changed the facts. What’s Christmas, when your face is aching and your heart as well? What’s Christmas, anyway, out of the countries that invented it? I defy you, plant; yes, and I’ll spite you too. For see:’—She made a dart into the bushes, and extended triumphant, as though calling her adversary to witness, a mossy lump of wood. ‘That’s a log,’ she said gravely. ‘It’s my log, what’s more, gathered here while you outfaced me. And facts may stare as they will, I’ll have a real fire to burn my log, all for myself alone, to-morrow being Christmas Eve.’

Ladies who soliloquise are rare, and pure English ladies rarer; and to the attentive listener the voice of this person—a tired little timbre it had, even when she was at her liveliest—might have been perceived to bear an accent: a lilt or song of a corner of that island which is least English of the three.

A native of Kerry would have claimed the voice, yet stood in doubt ; for the manner of other lands had overlaid it, and it was more a reminiscence than an actuality. Some of the expressive gesture of France went with it, and withal a faint American blurr upon the 'r's.' But the whole speech had a humorous decision which blent all into a character, quite at war with the fatigued indifference that hung on voice and utterance. Or so it seemed to a bearded Englishman of middle age who overheard.

It is perhaps the doom of those who soliloquise, in whatever theatre, to be overheard : still more of those who soliloquise in an ancient palace-ground of whisper and intrigue. The avenues of Versailles are bold indeed, wide enough each for a regiment, and cut sheer through the landscape in a garden where the measurements are miles ; but the little paths are crooked and secretive, the bosquets haunted by phantoms of cunning courtiers and lurking gallants, and ladies whose cheeks even now in ghosthood would flame at a glance. It is contended that the last of that flower-band died great deaths : and doubtless there are nobler ghosts to be sought in the prison-cells of old Paris ; but it is still less to be doubted that many who so died had lost, even for generations, the art to live with dignity.

The Englishman, whose short cloak and pointed beard gave him a vaguely Elizabethan aspect, and who was lanky and hollow-eyed as one of the ghosts himself, had given little thought to the girl at first. He was meditating, or drinking in an atmosphere, as he doubtless would have put it. If he was drinking

in rheumatic damp as well, it was so much the worse for his joints. He was watch in hand, for he had a train to catch, and was staying out the uttermost hour in the gardens before they closed for the night. He was not even sure, so heavily the accumulated languor of the place weighed upon him, that he would not miss the train, and ignore the gates, and spend the night as now in dreaming of the significant rich past he loved. No one in Paris would miss him, to signify. Pat Morough might swear a little, when he looked in from the upper floor at ten to chatter. Madame Rochette might scold him next day, while she cooked his Christmas dinner : but provided she cooked him a good one——

Here his attention was distracted by the girl's dialogue with the mistletoe, and he became amused to such a degree that the spell of the gardens fell off him.

'Who's the voice like?' he took to reflecting instead. 'Who the devil—by all the attendant powers, could it be?'

Then the girl turned aside, one slight, bare hand raised pathetically to her cheek, a light frown of pain—or strain—upon her brow. He rose behind his bush, and 'Madam, may I——' was beginning, when the phrase was cut off by her speaking again. This time, emerging to the open, she addressed the view, dimly sketched in grey and blue at the extreme limit of the vista.

'Beautiful,' she said, still with that subdued vivacity, in that weary little voice. 'Beautiful, beautiful, but I see right through you now. It's a mad poet I'd be watching you, or a practical

person : and you've made me that among you. I'll be it in good earnest after this. I'm little and poor, am I not ? Madeleine off home without a word to me, and mistletoe out of reach, and a dentist to-morrow on Christmas Eve, do you hear ? —with the Christmas money to pay him. But I'm better than you, than all of you : for I'm living and fit for life. Dead things, bonny and dead and done for : I'll look at you, and laugh at you, and love you, but I shall not keep. No,'—she raised the log she held as though to threaten them,—'you are uncollectable.'

She stopped on the queer word, flung a glance upward, and shadowed another un-English gesture.

'Like the mistletoe I wanted,' she said plaintively. 'Good night.'

It was the same queer word that visibly decided Geoffry Horn. He stepped out of the encumbering leaves and mould, to the footway that rang to his steps and disclosed him.

'That bough at least is collectable, Miss Clench, to anything over five-feet-ten. Will you permit me ?' he said. He coloured too, for he was a shy man, and much afraid of alarming such a slight little shadow as she was.

She stopped and gripped a hand to her side, but faced him squarely with steady eyes. One would have judged this girl had already met adventure. 'Who are you ?' she said, accenting so as to avoid the least rudeness. 'Have I seen you ?'

'No,' he said. 'I have had the advantage, though I assure you, inadvertently. I was mooning here in ambush when you came. I know your

cousin in Paris,' he added, as she still gazed steadily under a strained brow. 'Your cousin Patrick—Kathleen's son.'

'Kathleen's son,' she echoed him, seeking as it were for light in a fog of new and rapid impressions.

'What, and you knew Kathleen?'

'No,' said Horn again, 'nor Brian either. They are names to me both, only familiar names.'

'They would be,' said the girl. 'Yet you know I am Brian's daughter, so it seems?'

'I guessed it. Was I too bold to guess?'

'But how?'

'I had heard there was a daughter at school in France. But I think it was really the word you spoke. The Clenches say collectable.'

'I,' she answered quickly, 'do not use it as the Clenches do. They take it for beauty, I for use. I am not of the true breed, do not think it. I am born to be useful, and collect nothing and nobody that cannot help me.' The frown, as she spoke with anxious energy, was deepening on her troubled little brow. 'I have not long,' she said, 'for the gates will be closing, and I've work to do. Will you tell me who you are?'

'My name is Horn, at your service.'

'Horn? I have not heard of you?' She still seemed searching.

'No,' he said, with a smile. 'The records lack my name. In truth, Miss Clench, I am nothing to the family. But I live for the moment on the floor below Pat,'—he offered the address,—'and so——'

'So you'll be caring for him,' she finished. 'Patrick's a Clench, sir, is he not?'

'I'd not dare to gainsay it.' Mr. Horn laughed.

'It's kind of you to look after him,' said the girl. 'All alone there so long, the poor boy. How old is he?—but I should know. Nineteen is it?—Twenty?—Well, yes, that will do.' She gathered up her scarf with a business-like air. 'You must let me see to him,' she said, holding out a little hand in a worn merino glove. 'It's very good of you, but I'll have the time for that.'

Geoffry laughed again, and took the hand. 'The clan spirit is magnificent,' he said. 'I marvel how old you are,' he was thinking; and, since she had come near, quite cursed the fading light.

'Oh, I'm used to them,' said Miss Clench, with her first demure smile. 'I am even in training for the profession.'

'You'll excuse me: you mean Brian—your father is already in your charge?'

'Brian has been: and he will be again.' She stopped. 'Brian's in America, gone West for the present,' she said, and turned suddenly as if to go.

'You have not got that mistletoe,' said Horn.

'Leave it,' she said. 'It's prettier there.'

'But you shall have it. Would you be beaten by a bough?'

He leapt; and whether or no indignation lent his lanky form agility, he caught and brought it down, a fine wreath white with berries. As he extended it, the girl put her hands behind her.

'I am beaten,' she said, 'just the same. I stood conquered there and miscalled it. You must have heard me.'

'Take it as a gift then,' he entreated. 'Or a lesson—what you will.'

'I'll take it as a lesson, thank you.' She seized it in her gloved hand daintily. 'It's as grand a bit as I've seen,' said little Miss Clench, with a grateful smile.

'What is the lesson?' Geoffry pressed to detain her.

'Only it's poor to abuse a thing you cannot catch. I might as well abuse Brian, mightn't I, or anybody?'

'Are you trying to catch him?'

'I'm waiting to jump at him—oh,' she cried, blushing, 'I don't know what I'm at to-night. I am not like this, with a stranger man, at common times.'

'I am a stranger man,' said Horn. 'Very good: we English always must be that, to such as Clenches. Your cousin also says I must sleep on a haycock under nine new moons before I can try to understand.'

'Did Patrick say that?' She hesitated, swaying, her eyes on him. 'I must see him,' she resolved, 'and soon. He will be like the others. Only—I am not.'

'You repeat it,' said Geoffry. 'Perhaps it needs repeating.'

'It does, a thousand times. You'd best tell Patrick that from me, Mr. Horn, before we meet.' Again she wavered a minute. 'You know him,' she said. 'Is he poor?'

'He is living on an allowance from his step-father.'

'Since Kathleen's death. Did she leave him nothing?'

'I doubt if there was anything to leave.' He watched her, wondering what she had been told.

'I know, I know,' she said. 'We wronged them both in taking it, we did, indeed.'

'You did not, surely,' Geoffry said. He thought, 'You can hardly have been born.'

'I did,' the girl said sharply. 'It's all on me, since I am made like that. *They* never think of money things—it's they that live happy without! Now I am sure Pat never mentioned that to you.'

'He did not, no; but facts were easy to divine.'

'*You're* made that way also,' she said wistfully. 'You think it matters—well, there must be some.' Once more she gathered her woollen scarf about her, and settled the bough and log as if to go.

'There's still ten minutes,' he protested as she moved. He felt a terrible charm in her Celtic tongue, emerging from the half-dark of the glade.

'I know it,' she answered, 'but I've neuralgia, and it's silly to stay out when one need not.' Her tired little voice was almost childish, and Geoffry's heart had a sudden pang. What was she—this lonely little woman? Where was she going—what was her life? On whom, most important question of all, did she depend? Her charming, worthless father 'gone West,' her father's only sister dead, her mother—he remembered Patrick's stories, of which 'Brian' was ever the hero, only with a changing heroine. Of which of Brian's many flames was this careworn child the daughter? If

indeed she was a child and not an old woman, or a spirit of the twilit woods.

'I may accompany you, may I not?' said Horn, having assured himself by a glance at the watch that he had missed his train.

'It is better not,' Brian's daughter replied with decision. 'You'll excuse me, but one knows a provincial town.'

'You have been here long?' He feared to seem too curious, feeling himself watched. It amused him though that he could be watched, for he seemed a mere grandfather beside her.

'Four years,' she said. 'I've plenty of acquaintance. Good night, sir, I will write.'

'Plenty of acquaintance, and all willing to say ill of you,' thought Horn. 'Miss Clench,' he called after her, 'I'm forty-five.'

'Are you?' She laughed again. 'That's Brian's age,' but still she moved away.

Horn reflected that she could not be much over twenty, in that case.

'May I give Patrick your address?' he said aloud, moving gently in her wake. Against the light she had a delicate light little figure, and Horn, oblivious of woollen scarves and mended gloves and such details noted only by a female eye, was convinced she was well-dressed. Later, he emphasised it in his description to Pat Morough, and misled him naturally.

As for Brian's daughter, she called her address to him from fifty paces, and Horn, anxious for every crumb, noted two more points about her. She pronounced the names elegantly and used French

for the numbers ; also, her voice, pitched to suit the distance, changed and deepened surprisingly, and rang bell-like through the woods.

Geoffrey waited until she had disappeared, and then wiped his brow as though the dialogue had heated him, and hurried, at an angle with the path she had taken, towards the nearest gate.

II

HE plunged into history with Morough that evening. He found the boy in his rooms, looking rather sad and tired, but he roused to life and interest on learning of his friend's adventure.

'It's the actress's daughter she'll be,' said Pat, who had history at his fingers' ends. 'Just like my luck to find her. My luck's sure, when I'm not looking for it.' ('For-ut,' Pat said, for he had a slight advantage in brogue over his cousin, though he could at will speak excellent English.) 'And must I wait for her to write, Horn, or go straight to her in the morning?'

'You'll wait, to be sure. She is in no such hurry.' Pat looked depressed again for a minute, but revived anew when pressed by question.

'The actress was an ordinary woman, they say, but terribly in love with Brian. I dare say she was clever too.'

'She made him marry her,' said Horn.

'She did,' said Pat, 'where many a better woman failed. He stopped with her too, for years, so it's to be supposed she had charm: pretty, they do not say. That was in New York, where this girleen was born. But one remark of Mrs. Brian's has come down, and it's not worth the preserving.'

'What was that, Pat?'

“ Brian’s a perfect daisy,” she informed somebody. “ I’d go with him to the world’s end for a look, and gladly : but he is a strain.” ’

‘ That shows her cuteness, I should think.’

‘ It shows her ordinary mind. But there,’ said Pat with compassion. ‘ You never saw himself.’

‘ Did you see Brian ? ’

‘ To be sure I did, the last year of my poor mother’s life.’

‘ Ah,’ said Geoffry. ‘ Was he hovering then ? ’

‘ He was in Dublin for the moment,’ said Pat, with dignity. ‘ He was persuaded with trouble to come to us, and must have stayed seven months. He has not been to Europe since that.’

‘ It was that visit, I presume, he brought the girl to school.’

‘ Doubtless it was, after he had left us. We saw no girl, not a flutter of her, up there. To see him and Kathleen together, ah, they were heart and soul ! She told me often I was like him, and me believing it, little cockerel that I was.’ Pat fell into meditation, leaning above the fire : and Horn’s mind attacked the shadowed history, his eyes resting on the boy’s face.

He knew enough of Brian Clench to feel how untrue the glamour was. The glamour rose from personality, doubtless, and the person was unknown to him : but try as he would, Horn could not believe.

Kathleen Morough, spoken of invariably by her camp-following as a princess, he knew at second-hand : not through her son’s lips, though Pat possessed a portrait, but by those of an acquaintance

he could trust. She had been an ill-clad, rather weedy woman, with hair irregularly parted and always half-down, and beautiful eyes. She kept open house in Dublin for all the Clench contingent, and her husband by the way. She spoke in an impetuous flood on all subjects, whether she was capable of speaking or not. She had an inborn feeling for poetry, played well and sculptured badly. She was an ardent and one-sided politician, having throughout youth shared her twin-brother's views and adopted his phrases. With both, politics and poetry ran together, so closely intermingled, that it was hard to say which was which. She was lazy in her household, which was in any case needy enough, careless of her husband's comfort, and grossly neglectful of her child. This child in consequence, by the logic of the Clenches, adored her, cried his eyes out when she forgot to kiss him good night, and listened to all her rigmaroles wide-eyed and credulous. On Morough's death Kathleen remarried without delay or difficulty, choosing at random apparently an unsuccessful and unattractive man. She brought him a small fortune, which melted mysteriously before Brian left for America. Her second husband, a bank-clerk with some inkling of business, tried for months to find out whether the considerable sum that had vanished, and was surely in Brian's pocket, had been borrowed, begged, or stolen. He arrived at nothing but floods of pretty eloquence from his wife, setting forth Brian as the heart of her, and any private possession between them as out of the question. Pat's stepfather Mr. Long came to the opinion that she literally did not

know either how or why the money had gone, and that Pat, a schoolboy of fifteen, was equally ignorant. He rated Pat, for not having more heed to his mother during Mr. Long's business hours, but—as seemed inevitable—he forgave Kathleen. According to Pat, the dull husband watched over his wife's last illness, contagious as it was known to be, night and day. Of the manner of her death the boy was ignorant ; for at a crisis of her illness she called him to her in a rush of sentiment, and he not unnaturally caught the fever from her. All he could be sure of was, that in his own subsequent and desperate illness none came near him but a hired servant, who invented endless lies to keep the truth from the feverish, half-frantic boy ; the plain truth being that Kathleen was dead and buried, and her husband stunned with sheer grief. Later, when Pat recovered, and became a pale, sad phantom round the house, Long took an aversion to him, and paid what he could to keep him at distant schools. The boy had, so far as Horn could discover, never had a home. He had had no education to mention, or only of the most partial kind. He called himself a Catholic, but was nearer to pure and perfect paganism than any mortal Horn had ever met. The music of his mother's tongue had been all art to him, her face all religion. He had been, as much as a precocious boy of fifteen could be, in love with Kathleen Morough, and spoke of her sometimes in a manner almost to shock the experienced bohemian Horn thought himself to be. According to her son, Kathleen had broken all hearts in Dublin that Brian had not collected ; and Brian, that fine, earth-

scouring freebooter, was the one soul left in the world that could restore him to full life and his lost ideals.

Pending this hoped-for millennium of his uncle's return, Pat Morough was tossed about from Ireland to England, and England to France, a delicate, feckless boy, falling in and out of love and scrapes alike with astonishing ease, variously and irregularly gifted, and lovable enough in himself to demonstrate the family attraction, even to a sceptic like Geoffry Horn.

The manner of their meeting had been as casual and as picturesque as any Clench could wish to invent. Horn, who had his small but comfortable rooms on the third-floor of a house in the Boulevard du Montparnasse, had been dimly conscious of the presence about the public staircase of a sickly-looking lad, dressed in odd garments of an old-world air, and always to be seen with companions who looked worse, in every sense, than himself. He was aware of women too, from time to time, and he called the gang privately 'the ragged company.' Walking one February evening by the quays near the Pont des Arts, he noticed a mass of people hanging over the bridge and pressing to the river-side. Being a capable Parisian and knowing his crowd, he rapidly gathered the occurrence. Some woman had leapt—a not unprecedented event—from the bridge into the water. A little knot had seen her go. A young man, walking from another direction, and having no connection, apparently, with 'cette infortunée,' had leapt also, regardless of the fact that the Seine was enjoying its periodic flood, and

the woman, who had been whirled under at once by the current, was long past human aid. Owing to the efforts of some watermen, aided by happy chance, the young maniac had been caught and dragged to land; and Geoffry, elbowing to the centre of the interested throng, recognised the pale face of the leader of his ragged company. The lamp-light glinted on a tragic mask of youth, streaked over with wet hair: and in all directions—'Comme il est beau,' the women of the street were muttering. Horn took steps at once, dragooned the police in a manner he could assume at will, gave the names of government authorities as his reference, and bore the boy, so soon as he showed signs of recovery, off in a carriage to his own rooms. There, with good brandy and hot soup, Horn and his housekeeper brought him round; and by his fire, towards the small hours, Pat Morough's tongue was loosened to tell his tale.

Horn had at the time no idea, and was barely yet certain, how much of the tale was true. Ordinary people and dingy events took great and spreading forms to the mind of a Clench: and Pat's tongue led him to diversions that were invariably beautiful, touching, or funny, even when they baffled credulity. The boy was evidently plagued with an imagination that had never been pruned, directed, or repressed. At his best he talked like a wit or a poet: at his weakest he lost himself in an orgy of words. His eyes, expressive as those of an animal, would seem meanwhile to be beseeching his auditor to pull him out of his tongue's entanglement. Pat hardly knew what a statement was, and could rarely get one

believed ; for the simple reason that in the very act of making one, his imagination would suggest— 'And if the contrary were true——,' and, by the wavering of his eyes, and loss of conviction in his tone, his fact would lose most of its value.

Horn, half-laughing, half-irritated, set him at last to a simple catechism.

'Where do you come from originally ?'

'West of the west,' said Pat. 'But my father settled in Dublin, and it was there my mother married.'

'You come from Dublin,' said Geoffry firmly.

'My mother married twice,' said Pat.

'But I suppose you had only one father. What was his name ?'

'Morough was his name, and Clench was hers. You'll have heard of the Clenches of Kildarling ?'

'I shall have heard of them,' thought Geoffry, 'in a week's time. How long since your mother married first, Mr. Morough ?'

Pat reckoned it as five-and-twenty years. Four children were born of her, and her not asking for them. It was little time she had for children.

'Where are your brothers and sisters then ?'

'Under the Irish soil with her,' said Pat, 'where I hope I'll be some day.'

'No thanks to yourself you are not under Seine mud,' said Geoffry severely. 'What possessed you to jump, with nothing to guide you ?'

'How should Pat not jump ? That had been a pretty girl, they said.'

'Did you know her ?'

Pat could not be sure. He had a wide acquaintance.

‘To judge from those I’ve seen,’ said Horn, assuming the schoolmaster with lessening scruple, ‘the people you know are not worthy of you. You come of a decent family.’

Pat went off at once. ‘It’s they would be glad at heart to hear an Englishman call them decent! When you call the great big mountains well laid-out, or the pattern of the stars a nice design——’

‘How old are you?’ said Geoffry.

He supposed—very sulkily—that he was twenty.

‘Where have you been at school?’

He named two or three schools, and two or three priests, and then, to Horn’s surprise, London University.

‘What did you do there?’ he said.

‘I heard classes for a time there, until I came away. It was at the wish of Mr. Long, my mother’s other husband, that I did it. You see,’ said Pat innocently, ‘I’m to be a schoolmaster next year.’

‘A schoolmaster! My good fellow, what will you teach?’

The youth had a gleam of gravity and reason. ‘I’ll teach what I can do, and that’s drawing,’ he said. Then, turning his soft eyes on Geoffry—‘You’d have no influence in the schools over there, would you?’

‘Over there,’ Geoffry came to understand, was England. He evaded a direct answer to the question, and asked—‘Why should you not teach at home?’

‘Him and me’s better far,’ said Pat, as though that were sufficient answer.

‘ You have a quarrel with Mr. Long ? ’

‘ None, beyond loving the same woman.’

Geoffry almost jumped : but he did not follow the suggestion to its conclusion then. ‘ Has he been unkind to you ? ’ he demanded.

‘ He hates me,’ said Pat, ‘ and that’s unkind, for I would not harm him since he cared for her.’

After this, expressed in a manner that nearly brought the tears to the inquisitor’s eyes, Horn discovered that Mr. Long had acceded in turn to each of Patrick’s demands, and given him regularly a very fair sum of money to live upon.

‘ Where is your money ? ’ the examination proceeded.

‘ I’d like to know,’ said Pat, hitting his pocket. ‘ They stole my purse out there, a bother on them.’

It was not for Horn to say if this were true. Later, he discovered that it was. He asked when the next instalment from Dublin fell due, and Pat told him, in a month’s time.

‘ And what,’ said Geoffry, ‘ do you intend to do for that month ? ’

It was merely a test question, for he already liked Pat absurdly, and nothing would have induced him to let him starve. The boy merely smiled at him.

‘ I’ll go above soon,’ he said, ‘ and consider.’ Stretching his legs, he looked at Geoffry’s fire. ‘ A fire of cricket-balls,’ he said. ‘ It’s not so pretty burning as the turf. You have not been in Ireland, have you ? ’

The diversion made Horn pause again. Could it be delicacy, that led him to shelve the financial question ? He looked weak enough, and tired.

He could never have been strong, and the shock and excitement of the day had shaken him. Yet for all that he was well put together; he had capable hands, and a good head, though the weight of it lay forward over the eyes. 'Art,' thought Geoffry, 'and enthusiasm. The head of a man destined to fling for lost causes, even as he did to-day. He will always charm, and never attain. He's one of them, the world's pensioners. I shall have to do what I can.'

Leaning forward, he said, 'See here, Morough: I will lend you enough for board and lodging for this month, and amusements in reason. But amusements must stop short of such noise as I have often heard at midnight under the roof, and diversions must not be varied by jumping into a river in spate. You had better not work too much either, whatever your work is: at least for a day or two. For this night you'll stop on my sofa and sleep here. Reckon out what money you need, and I will give it you to-morrow morning.'

'I thought you would,' said Pat, raising his fine eyes to Geoffry's. He paused a minute as if his feelings overcame him. 'I am already obliged to you,' he said with a sad dignity, 'but it needs no more than this, Mr. Horn, to make us friends.'

III

LATER, Horn discovered that Patrick's 'work' was sculpture: though, as need hardly be mentioned, his business was other than it, being drawing. It is true, he seemed to draw well by nature, but he modelled more than well, and knew it. He had possessed a fiddle, he told Horn, but sold it. In fact his sculpture, his friend gathered, had gradually swallowed up his other interests, though his perceptions were always awake for beauty in whatever form, and his judgment on arts not his own, though eccentric, was often astonishingly correct. He remembered also such books as he had read, though they were an odd selection—and though it was clear he had not read Horn's.

Geoffrey had been very reticent about himself, for with such a character as Patrick, it was easy to be so. Pat's discovery that the solitary, middle-aged Englishman was a personage of distinction 'over there' was of quite recent date, and had amused Mr. Morough enormously. Horn was not quite sure if he credited the claim. Pat liked his patron warmly, and overwhelmed him with his confidence. Horn was everything that was admirable and respectable and cultivated, but 'collectable,' to use the word of the Clenches, he was not.

'You're not collectable, Horn,' said Pat, the second or third time he borrowed money, 'but

you've the great soul.' And with this doubtful blessing Horn was fain to be content.

He never came very near to gathering what the 'collectable' implied, and Pat could never approach to a definition, though he threw forth illustrations wholesale. Some of the ragged company for whom Horn had expressed such hasty contempt had been so, as he was informed. The results of collectability he could gather by working the negative of his own condition with the positive condition of Morough and his uncle Brian. It was neither prosperity nor respectability, to begin with, but it approached occasionally to a very pure kind of happiness, a more childlike, vivid happiness than wiser men could imagine. It was not a shamefast condition either; Pat's instinct was to live like the city sparrows, pecking wherever crumbs were spread. As for Brian, the conspicuous thing he collected was other people's money, and perchance from time to time, if half his nephew's stories were to be believed, the life of a poor, industrious woman such as the 'actress,' of whom Horn had already vaguely heard.

The night of his return from Versailles, seeing his opportunity, he pushed enquiry about this actress, so suddenly become interesting to his mind, and assimilated a few new facts.

'Where did they meet?' enquired Horn, in the steady manner of concentration which he always employed to screw facts out of Morough.

'They met in a city tram-car. It's a story worth the telling.' The young gentleman fell into an easy chair, having borrowed a cigarette from

Geoffry's box. 'There was Brian in a street-car full of strangers, and far from his home ; and she sitting at the end, a beautiful woman under the light, and simply raised her voice to let the conductor know he had cheated her about a cent. She did no more than say these words, and it was over with her for all time. "Who's that?" said Brian, with a taking smile on the conductor, when he came his way. "How should I know?" said the conductor, who felt warm and dusty about the cent. "I don't know all the——" the conductor was rude. So Brian turned his smile upon the world, and soon had his whispered information. It was clear, you see, by the winks of them, that everyone knew the lady.'

'She was perfectly respectable, wasn't she?' Horn interposed.

'Not a word against her,' said Pat cheerfully, 'and so they told him doubtless. "What do I care about all that?" says Brian. "It's the voice for me. Will you present me, George?"'

'My dear Pat,' Horn protested. 'The tram was full of strangers.'

'So he had thought,' said Pat. 'He recognised this fellow in their discoursing as the friend of a friend. English he was, which accounts for the name. Well, this friend's friend shilly-shallied, being shy as the English are, but Brian pushed through and got his introduction, in the wings of a second-class suburban theatre.'

'You mentioned,' Horn reminded him, 'that everyone knew her in the public tram-car.'

'And they did so. Is it the first-class actresses

that are the most widely known? She was known in that town, or I doubt indeed if Brian Clench would have singled her. By the gods, he made her better known before he had done.'

'So he spotted her for her voice.' Horn, even while industriously sifting out the truth of the recital, had a sudden recollection of a girl's tone in a glade.

'For her voice alone. It was Brian had the taste in voices,' cried Pat, with energy. 'He'd track one at midnight through a market-place, and find it under the walls of Babel. Two singers he's picked from the mud that made their name—three at least if the tales be true. For there was no smallness in him, and it was all humanity he would serve by his discoveries.'

'Doubtless,' agreed Geoffry. 'In this case, he married her himself.'

'Am I not telling you it? That voice, found in this way, was more to his ears hearing it than the cry of a woman's first child at its birth would be. And it was all the lady had entirely, for to look at, she was plain.'

'She was beautiful under the lights,' said Geoffry. 'Right, Pat, go on: they often are.'

'It was a fine singer lost in her, as he soon knew: for her singing and speaking voice were one; and all he could, our poor Brian did to make her sing.'

'She had had no training probably.'

'Sing she could not,' wailed Pat, 'no more than an ass that tried to. She had not the training for it, nor the taste, nor ideas to match his own.'

'She did not wish to change a lucrative pro-

fession she was sure of for——' Horn got so far when Morough broke in.

'She wished for all he wished, and would have died for him. Her love was the town's talk, and his as well. He played to her, and sang to her, and poured his soul and mind upon her, that she should find the art of it. Long years he waited by her, and she still practising patiently. But the poor small woman, she could not. Her heart was broken for him surely,' Pat rapidly appended, seeing Horn about to speak.

'So he deserted her,' said Horn.

'He took a little travel that was necessary, just for his affairs. He'd have taken the child they had, loving her dearly, but that the woman would not. They had some talk upon it——'

'Quarrelled?'

'Well, wanting the voice that hid in her, what was there in her to care for? She was a cold woman too, keeping the money closely from him.'

'Did she not love him passionately?'

'She loved the man he was, as women must. But no further would she go, in kindness of heart, than suited her contriving. Such women and Brian Clench never could agree.'

'So he went to find others.'

'He pressed the child to him, and went. It was sorrowing he was later, doubtless, to find the woman dead.'

'How much later?' said Geoffry.

'Six years may be,' said Pat reflectively, 'or nine. He came to Europe with the girl not so long after that, the year myself was fourteen.'

'How old was the girl when he first left New York?' said Geoffry, who was consciously scheming to find Miss Clench's age. But all arithmetic was at fault with Pat.

'The age a girleen is to break your heart leaving her,' he said, his fine eyes melting at the thought. 'When the woman she'll be is in her, and she still light as a fairy.'

'Put her at eight,' said Horn, on the watch to catch a contradiction. 'Eight and nine and—say six. Miss Clench would be twenty-three if your reckoning is approximately right.'

'It's the whole truth I'm telling you,' said Patrick—a mere formula he used from time to time. 'Three-and-twenty's the age of a fine woman.'

This insinuation having no effect upon Horn, who seemed to be pondering in the fire-light, Mr. Morough had to start afresh.

'The daughter of Clench would be a pretty girl.'

'No,' said Geoffry at leisure. 'A little thing: busy, light, colourless, negligible: a water-fly.'

'Thank the Lord for that,' said Patrick to the fire. Horn turned an eye of amusement on him. 'For I'd have been in love with her,' he proceeded to explain, 'and indeed now I have not the time. It's small time I have to grow acquainted even, and she heart and all to me for her father's sake.'

'Humph,' said Horn. 'Then you have closed with the offer from that school for Easter, eh?'

'And if my stepfather stops my money for Easter, how would I do otherwise?'

'Have you closed with it, Pat?'

'There's few people I know would save me,'

answered the young vagabond, running his hands into his pockets. 'And my Cupid in the Salon, if I had the few shillings to help him there.'

'Demand your salary in advance,' said Geoffry rather grimly.

'Could I do that?' said Pat, not at all ashamed. 'Sure the English are not so trustful, even to do a great good by it. And the devil himself would stop my mouth,' he corrected himself in a fine burst, 'when the Englishman that saved my life is sitting there quietly to reprove me.'

'Then you're afraid of love,' said Geoffry, harking back hastily to the former point.

'Afraid is it? No more than a fish of the water.' Pat stretched his arms, showing his elegant young figure to perfection. Yet his eyes still looked melancholy, hollow almost, in his pale face, as they stared wistfully through the high window. 'Yet love is a wide, great thing,' he said. 'It's all life needs to be given it, Horn—as Brian gave his life—for them that have the horse to ride. Brian had the horse, but I have not. And so, you see, I'll be a little drawing-master in a country school. And that, the finest town in Europe, thick with the finest girls, will go wanting me—forget me soon.' He sighed bitterly. 'And Brian's own daughter waiting just outside of it,' he murmured. 'What a world—oh, what a world!'

Geoffry let him muse for a time, and watched him with a student's eye.

'What do you mean by the horse that Brian rode, Pat?' he asked presently. 'Money?'

'No, no,' said Pat, waking from his dream with a

frown of vague annoyance. He did not care to be recalled to a momentary image. Such, with him, passed and vanished as quickly as shadows on a stream.

'You must mean courage then. It is courage that you lack.'

'It is not, you man of sentences.' Patrick was frowning still. 'Hadn't I the courage to fling in that river, where few would have followed me? It is the horse. I was born without my horse—it was my mother said it sadly. So I shall taste and languish, linger and look in, but I am not to ride, and have, and hold.'

'This is a melancholy turn,' said Horn, still watching closely, for his voice had the ring of a rare sincerity.

'Yes,' he answered with innocence. 'It's not often you'll hear me speak like that. But I know well what I say, though I do my bit of boasting at times, as others do. Whatever else I say, you'd best not forget I have said this.'

'Very well, I engage not to forget. I dare say you will need reminding,' said Horn with a smile.

'You're kind to me,' the boy said with sudden passion. 'Well, I will go up now attic-wards, if you have nothing more to say of this.'

'Then I,' said Geoffry, unheeding him, 'am simply horseless too.'

'You're horseless and more,' said Morough instantly. 'For if you had the horse you couldn't ride him.'

'Couldn't I learn?'

'No,' said Pat with disdain. 'Whoever yet met

the man who learned to ride? If he's a rider at all, he does it the first time.'

'Ah. Then will you not be that rider, once you have found your horse?'

'Find, is it?' said Pat with a stare. 'How will I find it?'

'Why, as the heroes did, lots of them. Sigurd, you know, went seeking, and saw a horse on the hillside, the greatest of the herd——'

'German tales,' said Pat, but his languid eyes had a flash. 'Look here,' he said, leaning forward, 'why do you go talking to me, and tempting, when you find me good as I am to-night? You've been at the pains to make me good, with your English conversation. Would you undo the thing by a word?'

'I beg your pardon,' said Geoffry. 'The truth is, I fear you are only good to-night because you are tired.'

'And why should I be tired?' the boy said sulkily. 'It's you that's had the Thursday out.'

'And you have had it in, eh? Shut into yourself.' In truth, Horn had moments of remorse for having cut him off his companions; for wildly as he talked, he felt it did him good to air his thoughts. He was so young after all, but half Horn's own age; he had nearly forgotten how it felt to be young. At this moment he saw pretty clearly by Pat's looks, that he had been moping all day. He wondered a little if something lay concealed beneath that sulky air he now carefully guarded. It might equally well be bad health or a bad conscience—one never could tell.

'I'm all right,' growled Pat.

'Well,' said Horn, rising, 'I am going to the post, with a letter or two. You have nothing, I suppose?'

'No.' Motionless sulks on the part of Pat, his legs stretched out, his hands in his pockets. Horn was a hard man to deceive.

'You've a letter in your pocket,' he observed. 'Give it here.'

'I have not.'

'Isn't it that post of Wynne's at Bluffborough, that you have accepted?'

'It can wait till to-morrow, or the next day. Sure,' said Pat with a slight smile at his boots, 'Mr. Wynne doesn't want a business letter at Christmas.'

'It can wait, in short, till you have seen Miss Clench.'

'Her? I doubt if I'll have the luck to see her so soon.'

'Patrick, you great baby, give it to me. As soon as it is gone, it will be off your thoughts.'

'Well,' said Pat, after struggling a moment with his natural good temper and love of ease, 'there you are.' He rose and shot an envelope across the room. 'Take and post it, and hang me completely. You can read it,' he added as he swung from the room, 'if you want to. The English of it is beautiful.'

IV

GEOFFRY HORN had a little female note the next morning that made him smile.

‘DEAR MR. HORN,

‘Would it be better if you came with Patrick on Sunday to Versailles? I do not wish to disturb you.

‘Yours sincerely,

‘H. CLENCH.’

‘I’m to be chaperon then,’ he reflected. ‘Bless my heart, perhaps this is what I was born for.’ While he was still smiling at the missive, and speculating on the writing of it, Patrick came tumbling down, bearing another demure little letter, and in a state of childish exultation.

‘Clench it is,’ said Patrick. ‘See the name written clear. She’s her father’s daughter surely. Mine very sincerely, H. Clench. Why not my affectionate cousin?’

‘Why should it be when she has not seen you? And the initial is the custom in France. Am I to read it, Pat?’

‘To be sure,’ said Pat surprised, but leaning over to anticipate him. ‘She’s busy to-morrow on Christmas day, but I could see her on the Sunday.’

‘Very good. What do you propose to do?’

‘That’s what I came to see,’ said Pat in his most infantile manner, but still smiling broadly. ‘Will I ring, and ask for her, and have her out with me in the street?’

‘No,’ said Horn. ‘I think you will not.’ Looking at the handsome flushed face he could have laughed. The sight of Pat Morough at thirty yards was enough to flutter a French henroost into a fever. ‘We must,’ he said gravely, ‘be careful of appearances. What do you say to going down together, and walking in the park, and asking Miss Clench to join us by one of the fountains?’

‘That’s the idea,’ cried Pat as though relieved. ‘It’s a talented fellow you are, Geoffry. Then I shall see her coming a fair way off, and get the look of her.’

‘You’ll have to mind your manners,’ said Geoffry. ‘The park is a public place.’

‘Yourself will be there to pull me up,’ Pat insinuated, putting on a little more brogue to be engaging. ‘I would not frighten the little thing, God’s blessing on her.’

Horn was sure by this that Patrick was in great alarm of the interview with a staid schoolmistress older than himself, Clench or no. He was clearly as glad of his attendant as the lady was. Indeed, the letter was enough to stiffen him.

‘DEAR COUSIN PATRICK,’ it ran,

‘I hear you are in Paris, and it is a pity we should not be acquainted, as we are so near. I am here in a girls’ school at the address I have given. I have holidays till the Thursday over Christmas, more or less, for there are still some girls to care for,

and we take them by turns. To-morrow I shall be wanted, but Sunday morning I am to be at liberty, and Wednesday I have the full day. I could see you either here or in Paris, as will be most convenient. I hope I have the number correctly.'

And after that the prim signature, and the address in the Avenue de St. Cloud—'a bowshot from the Palace,' as she quaintly said.

'That's Clench,' said Pat, his finger on the word. 'Brian always said a "bowshot." But I cannot see him in the rest,' he added, turning it wistfully.

'Miss Clench declared she was not like the family. She told me to warn you,' said Geoffry.

'It's the actress she favours then.' Pat sighed, for he had his picture of the uncollectable actress. 'It's strange she should be teaching now, and myself to teach so soon.' 'To think the last of the Clenches should have come to that,' his tone implied.

'Teaching is a very good business,' said Geoffry. 'My family have been in it broadly.'

'And you teach yourself very well,' said Pat, with his sweet sly smile. 'A man could not live with you, Horn—or even two floors above—and not learn a power of things.'

'Well,' said Horn, smiling too, 'I am now to leave you to your cousin. She mentioned she would take you off my hands.'

'It's like a mother she'd be, then,' said Pat with changing eyes. He could not get a picture of this Miss Clench, and Horn seemed unable to project to Pat's mind the picture he possessed. Horn, accomplished though he was on paper, had not a very

facile utterance, judged at least by his young friend's standards.

'Were you frightened of her, Horn?' the boy said suddenly.

Geoffrey started. 'Not exactly—well, yes; perhaps I was.'

'You frightened? By the saints, then what will I be?'

'You'll be careful,' said Horn. 'At least I hope so. There—go along. I am busy to the eyes this morning; and you will get her all wrong if you speculate.'

Patrick, as was inevitable, did get his cousin wrong. His relief at actually realising her was proportionate. Within five minutes of the moment of meeting, near the bench on the terrace, below the brown beech hedge, each found in the other the thing they needed, and all formalities dropped dead between them. They talked like brother and sister—only she ever guarding her little attitude of half-comic restraint and plaintive, quiet tone.

Horn let them parade together, since Pat could not keep still; and sat, inwardly amused alike at himself and them, upon the marble bench. It was an early hour of Sunday, and the park was almost deserted, so that no great effort for decorum was necessary. The day, however, promised well, and a pale gleam of sun made the cold stone terraces more friendly. Far away, at mid-distance in the famous vista of wood and water, some boys were trying the ice of the great canal. Nothing near at hand spied at the merry meeting, unless the eye

of some gloomy guardian in the Palace above, waiting his time out for a fee ; or the yet more stony eyes of the classical statues, which seemed to-day to have crept out of their late cover furtively, to warm their limbs in the winter sun.

Withdrawing his eyes from the clean lines and flat colours of the prospect he knew by heart, Horn directed them to Patrick, marvelling anew at his grace and vividness, for it had not been his lot to meet many handsome men. The boy had his hat off, and was talking eagerly—about himself, as Horn was sure by shrug and gesture. She was listening, little Miss Clench, standing still for the moment, her hands folded on the knob of her neat umbrella. She was dressed in black as before, and wore what he supposed was her Sunday hat. At least it sprang backwards in the line of elegance, and carried a Viking-wing to either side. The gallant pose of the wings seemed to crown her well, light, slight and determined as she was. The instinct of her choice was right, Mr. Horn decided (since he had full leisure for it), emphasising that fearlessness in her that he thought he had discerned. Now, as the pair wandered back to him, he saw her face beneath its brim, colourless as he had said to Pat, with that slight ash-tint across skin, brows, and hair alike, that seems common to many American-born women. The girl's hair had no certain colour, though prettily disposed ; her eyes were an ordinary greyish blue, well-lashed, and full like Patrick's of quick-changing expression. She seemed a little shortsighted, squeezing them as she came towards the sun ; or else it was the

contrary, and she was trying to focus them on Geoffry's face.

'How is the neuralgia?' he said, feeling he must speak as they approached.

'Better,' she said, coming to a stop. 'I have had it out.'

'The dentist was rude to her,' said Patrick, advancing to her shoulder in brotherly fashion. 'I wish I had been there.'

'It was my fault,' she returned, 'for going to a cheap dentist. That is the way I do, sparing where I should not. A man who makes you so comfortable as that, you should be ready to pay well.'

'A dentist!' Patrick cried.

'He is a great man, I can tell you, to those that are in pain. He fills the world for them. There must be dentists and doctors, and they are to have their money. But I don't say,' said Miss Clench, 'that he's at liberty to be impertinent for his fee.'

'Are you poor?' said Pat, asking easily the question Horn had longed to insinuate.

'I have enough,' said his cousin, not the least offended, but gazing at him fixedly.

'Does Brian send you money, then?'

'Well, he has done so; but I earn as well. And I hope,' she said, 'soon I shall earn more.' A pause, Patrick regarding her with a comic brow.

'How old are you, I'm wondering, after all?'

'Well,' said Miss Clench, 'my father made a mistake. He told Madame Barrière I was fifteen when

he brought me here. But I found out, and charged him afterwards, and he admitted it.'

'More?' queried Patrick. 'What's the figure, then?'

'Less,' said Miss Clench, with dignity. 'My age is seventeen.'

'Seventeen? Oh, the darlin'!'

'Now, Patrick, be quiet.' She retreated on the gravel. 'Oh, you are like him,' she murmured.

'Like Brian, is it? So Kathleen always said.'

'You call her that!' said the girl.

'Since it was the name she told me.'

'I caught the trick from him as well. Listen, Pat: do not be too like him. What I mean is, it's not for everyone to be like Brian, and succeed.'

'Did he succeed?'

'I believe,' said Miss Clench guardedly, 'he lives a most successful life.'

'In love, or war—or finance?'

'Do not,' she said, her pale cheeks flaming suddenly. She winced as well, and turned her steady eyes away.

'I will not, cousin—what is your name, by the way?'

'My mother called me Harriet.' She resumed her pose of demureness.

'And she did well,' said Pat politely. 'I will do nothing, Harrie, but what a loving cousin may.' He sidled up to her, absurdly handsome and engaging.

'Stand where you are,' Harriet said, and stamped her foot. 'Now listen. I'm respectable here. I've a position—yes, a position to maintain. I have

got to maintain it, for the sake of myself and all of them. Be good now, will you not ? ’

But Pat, his eyes dancing, his Irish blood on fire, found it increasingly hard to be good. Pat needed his chaperon badly.

‘ It’s like this,’ Harriet continued, in her tired, rather dry, little tone. ‘ It is best you should know it at once, and it’s all you need know about me. We’ve all got to make our lives, and we can’t all be geniuses. Brian was a genius, granted. He’s a great man, and I’m little. I’ve even got the idea, though you will blame me, that we can’t afford a repetition. That’s my mother’s fault perhaps, and the fault of the anxious life we had together : I need not speak of that. My mother and yours, Patrick, were not alike, and mothers, as you’ll allow, have got to matter. Someone must make a stand, mine said to me, when I was only eight. She tried to and tried vainly, and so I took it from her. I’ve made a stand. I am——’ she looked at him under her lids—‘ I’m powerfully practical. I am, Pat ; my accounts come right always. At the least, I don’t go to bed before they do.’

There she stopped breathless, or expecting him to crow. But he only gazed in dumb admiration, and she turned in despair to Horn again.

‘ Make him see it, will you ? ’ she cried plaintively. ‘ It’s needful for him to know. You must see it’s needful, do you not ?—since we are left, and we are but two.’ A shaft of genuine entreaty reached him, wistful and delicate through her grey-blue eyes.

Horn rose and put a hand upon the boy’s shoulder.

'He'll see it, Miss Clench,' he said; 'he does already. We are there in Paris, the pair of us, to serve you simply. And give me the word at any time,' he added, smiling, 'if you want to get rid of him.'

'But I want him there,' she cried. 'It never could be that I mean. I only had to say it because—because it's best to get it over.'

Horn shook Pat slightly, to make him speak. Touched as he was, he hoped that the silence of the youth might be emotion; but he only appeared to be puzzled.

'Is it over?' he enquired.

'It is,' said Harrie. 'The tooth is drawn.'

'You have the conscience,' said Pat slowly, as though needing to repeat it. 'Geoffry, she's conscientious.'

'And a very good thing too,' said Horn.

'Not good,' said Harriet, 'but necessary.' She watched them a minute. 'Oh,' she murmured, 'and all the time I'm longing to play with the pair of you.'

'You can play then, darlin'?' Pat cried eagerly. 'When?'

'On Wednesday, as I told you, I am free.'

'Come and play with me in Paris on Wednesday.'

'You mean it? Patrick—will you be my correspondante?'

'With pleasure, if I can. She sounds feminine.'

'She must be feminine,' said Harrie. 'That's the point. Are you up in the laws of Public Instruction? Do you know what a correspondante is?'

‘I hope I will, when you write to me.’

‘*That’s* not the sense of it! You’re hopeless. A correspondante is a respectable person, recognised by the school direction as qualified to take me out.’

‘I’ll do that,’ said Patrick. ‘I’ll take you *off* if——’

‘Listen! I’m serious. I never had one all the years I was at school. All the others had always, and I used to pretend theirs were mine. But it is not the same. One of my own—a person of my own’—she wrung her gloved fingers unconsciously together—‘I have never had at all.’

‘I’m not respectable,’ said Pat regretfully. ‘Horn may do.’

‘I am not female,’ said Mr. Horn. ‘Why not Madame Rochette? She’s my housekeeper, Miss Clench. She writes a beautiful letter, if that is all that is needed.’

‘It is not needed really,’ Harrie reassured him. ‘I only like to believe I have someone there. You see, I am no longer a pupil now at the school, and Mme Barrière has no right to make enquiries, trusting me as she should. It’s only by old habit that she does it.’

‘Were you not always so trustworthy?’ queried Pat with a spark of hope.

‘I gave her some trouble at the first of all.’ Miss Clench’s eyes glinted an answer to his own. ‘You see, I was younger than she thought. I am now. There’s always that to be said for me.’

‘She will let you go unquestioned then,’ said Horn more gravely.

‘Unquestioned, Mr. Horn, she will not; she

loves questioning. But it's she will be unanswered if she does.'

'There's the spirit,' said Pat, approving her.

'Well,' said Harrie. 'Isn't it my day? She gave me the whole of it, of her own accord. I've worked for it, that I know.' She drew a long breath. 'Well, tell me, it's settled then. I'll dream of this to-night.'

'Pat meets you,' said Horn. 'Or Madame Rochette if you prefer. You come to lunch with me, if you will honour me, Miss Clench. After that——' he made a gesture that conveyed, 'You may frisk your fill.'

'It's lovely,' said Harriet, regarding him pensively. 'All clear till midday. But'—she swung about—'you and I, Patrick, will make no plans.'

'Not we,' said the youth, his exultation springing at every look he had of her. 'Harrie, I must beg of you to wear that hat.'

'This? It's my new hat, I may tell you, put on the first time this morning. But Mme Barrière doesn't like it. She says the feathers must come out.'

'What, never! And cripple the bird? You'll not stand that, Harrie, surely.'

'There are some things I must stand,' she answered. 'I expect that is one of them. It seems, the hat's a little too——'

'Flighty,' supplied Patrick, without the smallest effort. 'Well, now I have a picture of the woman. Did you ever hear the approach of that impertinence, Horn?'

Mr. Horn said modestly nothing, knowing not of such customs, nor of what degree of impertinence

was possible from one woman to another—but regretting the Viking-hat.

‘I am always,’ Harriet pursued, ‘trying to be tame as she’d have me ; but I suppose that something in me is always breaking out. This hat, for instance, which I bought because it was cheap and I liked it, is not tame ; it’s wild. It spread-eagles a little too obviously. It shows something in me that never should be there. I dare say she is right, the poor woman, and means well to me.’ All this in the same slight, weary tone, and gazing upon them tranquilly.

‘What can she do to you ?’ demanded Pat.

‘She can do a great deal. It’s my fate she holds between her hands.’

‘In paying you, you mean ?’

‘In recommending me. I am not going to stay for ever in this little place, perhaps you had better know ; I hope to go as a governess to England.’

‘To England ? Where ?’

‘Some great family in the country, with little children to care for. Good French and music is all they ask, and the salary is double what I have. Some old friends of Brian’s, Mr. and Mrs. Escreet, have been kind in recommending me ; but of course they ask a letter from Madame too before they quite decide.’

‘When’s it for ?’ said Pat, excited.

‘The month of April, they’re coming home from Nice, and I’m to join them then.’

‘Horn, my guardian angel, do you hear this ? I thank you for your sound advice. Now we’ll be over there together, the pair of us, and at the same

season. You'll let me see you in England, Harrie dear ? '

' It depends on my employers.'

' Her employers—the way she says it ! And what does Brian say to your governessing like this on your own account ? '

' Brian will know of it,' she said, ' when I arrive.'

' Will you not sit down ? ' said Geoffrey : for suddenly her voice failed, and he thought she must be weary. So Harrie sat on the stone bench, her umbrella held across her knees, and the two tall men stood to either side. So sitting, it seemed to one of them, she had the ease of a princess ; but her little face had a grey shadow other than that of the beech hedge, and her forehead was frowning. Pat, it would seem, saw nothing of the change her father's name occasioned. He spoke easily as ever, though with ready emotion. ' Isn't Brian ever coming to you, Harrie ? ' he said. She met him bravely and at once.

' When he's finished his affairs, he'll come.'

' What are his affairs ? '

' Why, what they have always been. You to ask that ! '

' Has he a new love upon him ? ' said Pat, with the easy interest of one who enquires as to a new situation, in the working world.

' It seems he is lost for her this time entirely,' said the girl of seventeen. ' I have not even heard it through him, the affair is too serious.'

' Is she a singer again ? ' said Pat.

' It seems not, if those by whom I heard are right. She's not professional at all, a young thing probably.

Indeed, they said he'd never get her, but you know what that saying is to Brian. When I heard of it, it was popularly said he had got his work for years to come.'

'And when did you hear?'

'In June, from friends of my mother's. From himself,' she added, hastily supplying his question, 'nothing for over a year.'

'And where,' Pat gaped, 'does the money come from?'

'I tell you, I make it. They keep me on at school, do you see, being useful for the English. I can get on,' she said.

'Get on?—but it's half your life gone, wanting him.' His frankness seemed to the Englishman unfeeling, but Harrie only smiled a little tender smile.

'Half my life,' she said, 'dear Pat. You see sitting here but the half of me.'

'But oh!' he mocked her, 'what the whole must be.'

Harriet did not answer beyond another slight smile, nor seem at all impelled to flirt, easy as it would have been with such a partner. She had clearly too many pressing cares, for such entirely youthful pastimes. Horn could not make out whether her sobriety was merely a matter of habit, and of pretending to be older than she was owing to Brian's 'mistake': or whether it was the true essence of her birth and upbringing. It melted at moments easily, as he had seen, but it melted only to resettle, leaving an effect of childish dignity; not unlike that of a young queen in exile, resigned to

the loss of all she had once owned, and still knew in heart to be hers.

She was at least extremely loyal to the father, the one possession she still passionately claimed. Again Geoffry noted, shadowed as it were in her, as it had been in Pat before her, the man's hopeless attraction.

'Brian had been very good to her,' she plaintively repeated in his hearing; for when Harriet declared she must go, and they all turned their steps to the station, Horn walked a little ahead, in the manner of a careful body-guard, leaving his little pair together. Yet owing to their vivacity, he could not avoid overhearing, and had much to ponder on.

That time Brian came to France, the last time his daughter had seen him in the flesh, they had spent a radiant week in Paris, and he had taken her to the Opera nightly, and even once to a great singer's private room. He had bought her charming clothes as well, some of which she had still; for, as she confided naïvely, her figure had not changed, she having been a well-grown girl at twelve. Patrick sympathised intensely, and being infinitely more curious as to Brian than as to the rest of Harrie's little affairs, drew her on the subject with great adroitness and lightness of touch.

Well, after that, Harrie admitted, the amusement stopped; presumably the money, whencesoever derived, ran out. The next thing was the jolting tram-ride to Versailles, and the memorable interview with Madame Barrière. Harriet had tried during the interview to keep her father 'good,' but she admitted, upon the apt suggestion of Pat,

that Madame was not a well-favoured woman ; also that, as that lady always expected to keep the lead in conversation, Brian, of necessity, talked her down. Madame was left gaping, with nothing to say, since most of her projected utterances had been supplied, dramatically, by the opposing party ; but she was not, as it eventually appeared, too favourably inclined to little Harriet, the girl thus left on her hands.

The character given her by her father Harrie had to live down, since it could not possibly be lived up to. Her pathetic situation, also beautifully sketched for Madame's benefit, was believed by that lady to be ' *blague*,' as various other items in the conversation proved later to be. Madame did not in her heart believe that Harrie's mother was either respectable, or dead ; and the indescribable lime-light thrown by such histories, for a French mind, was cast upon the little trimly built, decorous figure, daintily robed in dark colours. That the schoolmistress kept her suspicions to herself may be advanced in her favour : and that they ever leaked out at all, was more due to the girl's preternatural instinct, than to Madame's indiscretion, as is later to be seen.

Beyond the main facts of all this, which Miss Clench sketched to her cousin in their easy chatter, she spoke not at all of her personal feelings, nor of the innumerable infinitesimal jars and miseries from which she must have suffered ; nor did she hint at the drudgery and solitude which must have been her lot. It was Horn, quick and sympathetic in his imaginative insight, who supplied the intervals

of the events which Morough found merely amusing ; for he felt that something besides the facts she gave was needed to account for the shadow on her face, and the line he had seen in full sunlight on her brow.

Harriet had done some 'collecting,' she assured her cousin, and had not been entirely unblest by fortune in that matter, in her little backwater at Versailles. Madeleine, the quasi-friend who had lately turned her back on her, was collectable, though the daughter of an old family, and 'almost too refined to live.' Another of the mistresses, a German-Swiss, heavy-footed and sentimental and terribly conscientious, had blossomed into collectability in one evening, when Harrie discovered her passion and genius for music.

Pat wanted to know about the appearance of this pair of persons ; and being informed that Madeleine de Bois-Sévérac was pretty, and Bertha Lindt was not, pursued his enquiries after Madeleine.

Geoffry had leisure to note and wonder at Harriet's unchildish suppleness and patience with him, as though centuries of experience of such natures had been hers. The tacking manœuvres she accomplished in talk to follow him were not mere *laisser-aller*—a chance breeze shifting the sails—but the guiding hand of experience and discretion. She was watching always, easy as she seemed ; and only just at the moment of farewell, she became for five minutes young again.

'I just wanted to tell you,' she said, as she took Horn's hand. 'It's awful to lie, isn't it ? But if I have to about Wednesday, I shan't stop short of

some good ones. You are an old friend of my father's—is that quite impossible ? ’

‘ Not at all,’ said Geoffry, basking in the soft beam of her eyes upon him. ‘ An acquaintance of mine saw Mr. Clench in Dublin five years back, and spoke to him twice.’

‘ Did he, indeed ? But that was lovely of your acquaintance. You are a Mr. Rochette—wasn’t it ? Or have I mistaken your name ? ’

‘ Rochette,’ Horn agreed. ‘ And my wife writes admirable letters—at an instant’s notice when required.’

‘ I will not forget it. And may Heaven pardon the lies I’ll tell, if I tell them. Good-bye, Mr. Horn. It was “ chic ” of you to come. “ Chic ” is the best thing we can say of anybody at Versailles, and so you will understand.’

V

LITTLE Miss Clench went home from the station rather thoughtful. The excitement of hearing a tongue from the past and the heart of her own land, in dispersing, left her plunged in a world-weariness which was equally the inheritance of her race. She would have said in her quaint tongue that she was grieved for Patrick's going from her ; and left out of account such details as the strain for months past to save out of a small allowance : the aching desire for her father's news : or more immediate, the fact that she had not slept well, owing to pain, for a week.

She was longing for a little friendly talk with an equal to relieve the feeling that weighed on her, and when she saw ahead of her in the market-place the plump figure of the daughter of the house, Mlle Geneviève Barrière, she hurried to overtake her. This, like many of Harrie's impulses, was rash ; for Mlle Barrière was returning from Mass, where Miss Clench herself had been supposed to be ; and she laid herself open at once to a well-laid train of suspicion and enquiry.

She knew Geneviève after a fashion very well, in the sense of having been much in her company. She had spent much time and vivacity on instilling English into her somewhat impervious intellect,

and her marked success in making her talk that tongue had led to her first paid engagement in the Barrière household. The young lady did not at least refuse to look at her, as she had done by all Englishwomen hitherto presented to her sight. A trifle of commercial instinct on Mlle Barrière's side may also have entered into the affair: for Miss Clench absorbed good French so fast, that it became a matter of national honour to keep the traffic equal, and gain at least as much as she gave.

Mlle Barrière was not a bad girl, but she led a somewhat ungrateful life, which had soured her temper. She was tied by duty and lack of initiative combined to her mother's pension; refusing to teach, she remained half housekeeper half handmaid, when she privately considered she was fit for better things. The sight of Miss Clench, with her little air of possessing her own soul, and her power of humorous mockery of herself as well as of other people, tended always to augment this discontent. There was between Harriet and Geneviève in these latter days a sort of armed neutrality, which one was too prudent and the other too languid to break. The French girl was, or thought she was, exactly of Harrie's age, and there were intervals in her habitual assumption of superiority when she openly expressed envy both of her freedom and her loneliness.

Miss Clench's first remark touched the sore place unconsciously.

'Where is Lucile?' she said, alluding to the *bonne* who was always attached to Mlle Barrière when she went to Mass alone.

‘Lucile is buying beetroot,’ said Geneviève. ‘I sent her off. I have no need of her, and she is too afraid of me to tell. Besides, I gave her a ring yesterday for the fête.’

‘Did you?’ said Harrie, with a pang of remorse. ‘I had nothing for her but my old hat.’

Mlle Barrière threw a supercilious glance at her companion’s head, and her brow knit anew. Miss Clench, for a so-called Englishwoman, was too well-dressed: though how she managed it on next to nothing, Geneviève spent time and curiosity in vain to discover.

‘And where may you have been?’ she asked. ‘I did not see you in the church.’

‘No,’ said Harriet. ‘I took a walk in the park instead. It was such a fine morning, and friends of mine came over.’

‘Friends?’ said Mlle Barrière astonished. What did Miss Clench mean by suddenly having friends?

‘Yes,’ said Harrie, warm with the memory. ‘My cousin and another.’

In French, there was nothing equivocal in the genders, and the girl’s eyes opened wider. But she did not express surprise, for in her duty-conversations with the English girl, she had always made out a vast contempt for the prejudices under which her mother’s old-fashioned mind was wont to labour. This revolt she declared, as to-day in casting off the *bonne*, on all occasions when her mother was not by. Harriet, though at times annoyed at her weakness, believed these professions to be sincere, and saw no harm in encouraging them

a little, since it was on this score that the girl claimed her sympathy.

Mlle Barrière noticed after some minutes that her companion was biting her lip, and was sure she was regretting her confidence. The confidence itself was rolling round her brain, gathering as it rolled a wealth of furtive suggestion. It was an unusual lump of new material for consideration, criticism, and eventually for close discussion with her intimates. Such matter of talk did not occur every day at Versailles, where subjects of conversation were threadbare with constant use. This would wear, Geneviève felt, for some time. Formulated, it had four parts, each capable of extension. The self-contained Miss had a cousin, the cousin had a friend, both masculine gender, and she avoided Mass to meet them, and wore a new hat.

‘You have extremely mauvaise mine to-day, chérie,’ said Mlle Geneviève, suddenly affectionate. ‘You have surely been too long in the sun.’

‘I’m wanting sleep,’ said Harrie simply. ‘You’ll observe I’m staggering for want of it. Christmas night I had none, what with midnight service and the toothache; and last night you might have said I missed my tooth. I suppose the pain had occupied my thoughts more than I knew.’

She smiled, but Geneviève did not find anything amusing. She was weightily deciding that Miss Clench had lost her looks, what looks she ever had, and if she could not lose her figure and pretty gait, there was nothing about her sensationally attractive. A girl like that did not need a *bonne* in the street,

consequently any comparison between them was barely possible.

Having arrived by measured steps at this point, she felt kindly enough to offer some titbit of interest in return. Being in her mother's confidence, she had a store of such little secrets, which she used with instinctive economy.

'Fräulein Lindt is leaving at the New Year,' she said, drawing closer to her companion.

'Never!' said Harrie, stopping, her brow knitting tight.

'Yes, it is at last decided. And she will know this evening.'

'But—the New Year? She should have more notice. It is too hard on her.'

'Ma chère, she is impossible. Dirty—loud—her voice, you know, and the noise she makes on the piano: she thinks of nothing but the piano. The pupils detest her, and Madeleine has twice complained. She told Maman before she left she would speak to her own mother in the holidays.'

'Well,' said Harrie, 'I shall speak to Madeleine. The little cat, when poor Bertha mended her lace for her, and helped her in her practising for weeks for nothing. Geneviève—think! What can Bertha do in a week? She has nowhere to go. It is cruelty.'

Mlle Barrière shrugged her plump shoulders.

'Such things,' pursued Harriet warmly, 'can only be done in a private place. Down there at the big school, it would be impossible.'

'If you say so to la chère Maman,' said Geneviève, 'you will be sent packing as well.' Indeed, there was frigid jealousy in the Barrière institution of the

growing reputation of the great public school. The small seminary could only disguise its isolation in a backwater of the great river of state education, bearing its offer of cheap instruction to all, by an assumption of superiority, and an adroit appeal to those parents for whom retirement connotes distinction, and high prices a high polish.

'I have a mind to say so in public and follow her,' cried Harrie. 'It is heartless.'

'You have a heart for all,' murmured Mlle Barrière.

She could not understand how, with Madeleine de Bois-Sévérac's friendship and countenance at command, this amazing girl could choose so promptly the other side. Madeleine, a general favourite and the pride of the school, had confided to Geneviève that she would have carried off 'la petite anglaise' to her mother's château for the holidays—as she had indeed half-promised to do, had it not been for her sudden and tasteless friendship for the vulgar German. Geneviève could not believe Harrie had so little penetration as not to discover this, until she heard her openly lament Madeleine's infidelity. Geneviève was not without hopes of getting the next invitation herself, could she manage a promising affair with sufficient tact and foresight. She was thinking hard—as hard as her brain-power would admit—while she talked to Harrie on the homeward way. Her thoughts on the whole were profitable also, for Mlle Barrière seldom wasted her time; but she had leisure to mark that a young officer on the opposite pavement, one of the notably well-behaved military contingent in her town, was regarding them

thoughtfully while he twisted his moustache ; and she even had the chance to languish a little for his benefit, since security, in the person of the *bonne* Lucile, with arms as red as her beetroot, was now puffing steadily in her wake.

At ten that night Harriet was in *Fräulein* Lindt's tiny room, helping the poor creature to stifle her sobs. Stifling was necessary ; for firstly, *Fräulein* Lindt sobbed loud, and secondly, though the younger children in the neighbouring room were sleeping soundly, the great 'silence-bell' had rung more than an hour since, and the house had a mouse-like—or rather a cat-like stillness. The unseen eye of sleepless Surveillance watched over that lady-like establishment, and under its roof one never felt alone.

'I asked her to mention a point where I had failed in my duty,' *Fräulein* Lindt sobbed to Harrie in her heavy French, 'and she could find nothing to say. There is nothing to say, for I have done all and more than she bade me. The hours she gave me for my art I have rigorously observed and never exceeded—not though the hour found me in the middle of a scale. If I have forgotten myself occasionally when interrupted, can she rightly complain ? The time was mine by arrangement ; I bought it by so many hours of grinding toil—it was my only recreation.'

'Time is the hardest thing in the world to buy,' said Harriet sententiously. 'Sometimes I think time never is your own : so many people are tearing at it, as soon as you come to think.'

‘Not to me,’ sobbed Fräulein Lindt. ‘Those hours to me were silence, Nature’s vast silence and her harmony.’

Harrie’s mouth twitched. Bertha’s hours of practice had been so far from exhibiting Nature’s silence for the other inhabitants of the house. Then, remembering the woman’s intermittent inspiration and real gift, she grew serious again.

‘Try for an English situation, Bertha,’ she murmured earnestly. ‘You will be happier there. See, come with me to Paris on Wednesday, and we will go to a registry office together. So good at music, and three languages, there must be something in the market that will suit you.’

‘No,’ said Fräulein Lindt ; ‘I am not required. I have always felt it, and now I know.’ She lifted her ugly, tear-worn eyes. ‘You, dearest Miss, elegant little creatures like you and Madeleine, are welcome always, and to all the world. But I have nothing to attract.’

‘Bertha, you have genius. Is genius nothing ?’

‘It is not for sale,’ said Fräulein Lindt with finality. ‘I do not even wish to offer it. I have no courage left to strive, and I am better in my grave.’

‘You are better in your bed,’ said Harriet sensibly. Bertha’s weighty gloom had power to overwhelm her own slight miseries, to numb her senses by pounding, as it were ; but it spurred her mind anew to passionate activity. She had at moments a child’s fear of the violent, ill-regulated nature, enclosed in iron bonds of her self-imposed duty, but never completely incapable of breaking through them. She had tried Bertha all ways in

her moods, but had found no surer way of managing her than her favourite pose of dry, light-handed reason; though now while she reasoned, helping her into bed, her voice was trembling with pity and indignation.

‘I have begged to leave finally on Friday,’ gasped Fräulein Lindt, crawling into her narrow bed, ‘before the girls come home. I gather Madame has already replaced me, for she made no difficulty. I meant to ask for my extra half-term’s salary, but her cruelty so oppressed me I could not. I could not formulate an application. I shall—I shall not willingly look upon her face again.’

‘Nobody willingly looks upon Madame’s face,’ said Harrie. ‘She’ll give you a letter of recommendation, I hope?’

‘She has done that, though I have not dared to read it.’ Bertha reached for a neat envelope, and extended it in her shaking fingers.

‘It is all right,’ Miss Clench reassured her, having read it through by the light of the tiny lamp. ‘You are sure to get something soon. What about going back home in the interval?’

‘I never could,’ moaned Fräulein Lindt, ‘unless to die. There are six others, and they do not need me.’ Indeed, Harriet knew that the great awkward bird, uncomfortably gifted, had been kicked out of the parental nest, and left to live as it could. After reflecting a little, she asked Bertha what money she had.

‘Sixty francs,’ said the poor thing, ‘and my opera-ticket for Wednesday night. Ah, with how glad a heart I had meant to go.’

‘Do you wish to get rid of the ticket?’ said Harrie, more strenuously practical than ever.

‘No—oh, no. I shall keep it and attend. It means three hours of glory and forgetfulness.’

‘Collectable,’ thought Miss Clench. ‘Only they can be happy in the face of such uncertainty.—Well, Bertha, think now of that opera all you can, and you will sleep. What is it going to be?’

‘Rheingold,’ said Fräulein Lindt, her swollen eyes tight shut, and her strong blunt fingers clasped dramatically. The German syllables rolled from her mouth as though they actually contained riches.

‘But that is the fine music for sleeping upon,’ said Harrie, lowering and mellowing her tone. She could do this at will, as some birds do in a single phrase, dropping its tired little timbre completely, and speaking full and quietly. ‘Remember how it opens with the river flowing, Bertha, curling and marching along, like some that you have at home. Those are the sounds to take you into dreams.’

‘Speak—go on speaking,’ said Fräulein Lindt intently, with the face of a sleeping prophetess. ‘I value friendship more than operas; and there is a treasure hidden in your voice, beloved Miss, greater than the gold beneath the Rhine.’

Harriet, in the dim light, had also knit her fingers together; sorrow and sympathy, and the memory of the music she adored, had almost broken her. But she murmured on till midnight, barely thinking, speaking nothings light as air, to which her Celtic instinct lent the fall of poetry. When her friend was at last asleep, she herself was but half conscious, and she could only just stagger to bed.

She slept intermittently, and dreamed of Bertha and Patrick, as though some impulse of her subconsciousness had already combined them. She woke before break of day, and by the light of her little 'pigeon-lamp,' still with her friends in mind, she reckoned out her own resources. Sixty francs would barely keep the improvident Bertha for a week; yet she herself had little more, though her situation was safe and her salary owing her. Nevertheless she had in the savings bank quite a goodly store—no less than the sum of all Brian's presents to her since she began to earn. Harrie looked through her deposit-book and added it up with an earnest brow. Anent this money she had a fixed superstition: it was not hers nor Brian's, but Kathleen's, and so, of course, it was now the property of Kathleen's son. The question now perplexing her was, could she make him take it, or even venture on the offer. It bore no proportion probably to the debt her father really owed: a paltry little twenty pounds, languishing unused. Kathleen herself had never claimed or admitted the debt, and her son had probably forgotten it. Well, could Harriet in that case 'lend' a little of it, temporarily, to Bertha Lindt? It was a mighty problem, both moral and financial, to a child of seventeen.

There was poetry in the bank-book, too. Each of those entries timed one of her father's letters, and marked a season of joy. Brian had destined each sum in his droll fashion, adding not unfrequently a comic account of how the money had been won or earned, in order to demonstrate to his young critic that he had come by it honestly. Here was 'candy

for Christmas in case I forget,' a letter characteristically dated early in August. Here were 'fifty francs to buy her a long new feather in almond-green, for this rainy season will surely have spoiled the old.' Here was another small sum for a strenuous purpose, vigorously underlined. Cora Warden, the Californian prima donna, was singing for a week in Paris, and Harrie was to get a seat at whatever price, to hear her in *Carmen*. Harrie had heard Cora Warden from the gallery, after two hours' patient waiting on a Sunday afternoon, and she had sent Brian the opinion demanded ; but she had stored his dollars none the less, with the toilsome devotion of an ant, and had watched the little sum grow with the amused satisfaction of one who certainly had not saving in the blood. That the proceeding contained an implied reproach to her father the girl never imagined, for she was far from condemning his mode of life. His proceedings were himself : peculiar to the make of man he impersonated, a make from all other points of view delightful, and only a very little harassing from this. His gifts to her had ever been charmingly offered and imagined, if oddly timed. So long as Brian loved her, Harrie's instinct was to labour for him as minutely and constantly as a hundred ants could do ; and when he forgot and neglected her, she bowed her head, shrugged her little philosophic shoulders, and laid up her slight store against the evil day when any might dare to attack him, and he might have to fall back upon even a daughter's support.

'I must talk to Patrick to-morrow,' she resolved, shutting the bank-book with a sigh, and laying it in

its hidden place. 'The boy has a clever face, and who knows but he may be earning after all !'

After that she wrote two notes, still with the bent brow of strenuous decision : one to Madeleine de Bois-Sévérac, setting keenly forth poor Bertha's situation, and giving it as her opinion that the least Madeleine could do, having deprived her of a good place, was to ask her mother to recommend her to all her connections, and if possible find her a better one soon.

The second note was to Pat himself, requesting him to excuse her to Mr. Horn, since she had business on Wednesday morning, and was to lunch with a friend. She would join him at two, she said, anywhere he chose to select, and he would be a 'good boy not to complain of her.'

Patrick did complain, aloud and volubly ; and revenged himself by making a hurried round of the theatres, and buying two very good and expensive seats at the Opéra Comique, which were all that were left, since in Christmas week one cannot choose. He did not tell Geoffry Horn of this extravagance, and Horn did not enquire, for he felt he had interfered sufficiently in what was really a family affair. Besides, when Pat had paid his morning visit on Tuesday, and had left his message, Geoffry felt himself a little depressed, for his work was not advancing, and he was in the state of mind to gnaw the fingers and take small things hardly.

He went in a shamefaced manner to Madame Rochette and countermanded the exquisite lunch he had ordered, explaining that 'cette dame' had

been detained by her affairs, and was unable in consequence to honour him. Madame Rochette, who adored and pitied Geoffry in about equal proportions, watched his face while he spoke, and said a private 'Humph!' at the end. The lunch she eventually gave him—for one person instead of three—was, if possible, more exquisite than that he had countermanded; but she noticed he ate it without either attention or remark. And this was rare, for Horn commonly liked his food, and talked to her very freely, being interested in detail in every member of her family, and all her pet schemes of economy for him and for them.

The fact was, that while he ate his truffle omelette, and his vol-au-vent, and his 'plumpounding froid' and chocolate 'mousse,' Horn's mind was taking long and perfectly fruitless excursions in all directions, and the goal of its wandering was the real reason of little Miss Clench's change of mind. It perplexed and harassed him very much, having beneath all his culture the kind heart of a child, that his presence, or even his existence in the abstract, could in any way be disturbing to this girl of seventeen. Of girls in the flesh he knew nothing, though he had dissected the workings of the feminine heart on paper a hundred times. He was sensitive extremely as to such: afraid of going near the fragile house they lived in, lest an awkward step or rough breath might shatter its iridescent dome. He had listened to Pat's hearty talk of his little cousin almost with shrinking; and he was supremely disgusted—disgusted to nausea—with a certain paper-maiden, who filled a sub-

ordinate rôle in his forthcoming play, and who had pleased him exceedingly in the invention. This little Vanessa would not do : she must come out ; and the furious elimination of Vanessa's portrait had been all Geoffry's work for the two days past.

A novelist's imagination, when it trespasses on daily life, is a very tiresome thing. Horn had rarely been so imprudent as to break the glass wall between his books and humanity before. His books were delicate structures, full to the brim of himself : for being a shy man, he had not played with red-hot life very much, though he had turned it over carefully with the critic's pincers. To-day his imagination broke loose, straggled, as Pat would have said, and played him the strangest tricks. Miss Clench was already in Paris, it informed him at one o'clock : and having finished her delicate, mysterious girl's business, over which he drew a veil, she arrived at the rendezvous she had appointed—the rendezvous where Pat was not. Horn was sure he was not, for when was Patrick ever punctual ? After waiting a time, she would get indignant, that neat-minded little girl, and sure that her cousin was ill, or her letter gone astray, she would come up the Boulevard du Montparnasse, seeking the only house whose address she knew. She was bound to come (Geoffry wandered to the window), and as she looked at the houses and counted the numbers, the ill-mannered art-students, who inhabited all the attics in the by-streets, would look at her and possibly address her. (Geoffry leant his gaunt arms on the balcony, and screwed his eyes to peer along the street below.) Ignoring them

beautifully, as a well-bred girl could do, Miss Clench would find the house, speak to the door-keeper, climb the three flights, and ring at his bell, a neat, discreet little ring. Mme Rochette would go, creaking the boards as she moved, and wiping her hands. She would open the door and—well, Horn was glad Mme Rochette was there, for a wandering girl, Clench's daughter or no, would be glad to see her robust outline and kind, shrewd face. Mme Rochette had a girl of her own, and spoke of her in a way that Horn approved. He somehow thought the sight of her would bring Harrie inside, if only for a few minutes. And she would sit there, on a low chair in the salon, and balance her slim umbrella across her knees with two slim hands; and she would say, in a voice already familiar and unique to his ears: 'I must tell you, I only came to you because——'

At this point the bell did ring, and Horn sat down hastily at the table, and tried to believe he was thinking about something else. It is terrible how a middle-aged man's thoughts may wander in the half-hour of coffee-cups after lunch, that most admirable moment of the working-day. After an interval, Mme Rochette opened the door with a jerk and entered. Mr. Horn summoned his most ordinary tone and said, 'What is it?'

'Pardon, monsieur,' said Mme Rochette tranquilly. 'The coffee-tray, if monsieur has finished.'

'Oh, yes,' said Horn, removing his elbow from it with agility. He added lightly, 'I thought I heard a bell.'

'Ah? Monsieur has sharp ears.'

‘ Was it—anything ? ’

‘ It was only a young person,’ said Mme Rochette, ‘ arrived to beg. The concierge should not let them in.’

‘ Really ? ’ said Horn, more discountenanced still ; his eyes were fastened to the outspread pages of his manuscript. ‘ What did she—I mean, what did you say ? ’

‘ I told her she should be ashamed,’ said Madame cheerfully, clattering the china together, ‘ and sent her about her business. She had no need to begin her history, for it was written in her face.’

Her master remained stationary and did not lift his eyes.

‘ Remember another time,’ he said, ‘ to come to me.’

Madame Rochette opened her mouth a little over the coffee-tray, and stopped dead. She thought of three apt and eloquent answers simultaneously, but she said none of them. She retired instead in cautious silence, for Mr. Horn’s voice had been both dry and sharp.

VI

THE novelist's imagination was, of course, completely wrong. Any Irish beggar could have told Horn that a Brian or a Patrick may scamp or dawdle over all other engagements, but they will be neither remiss nor behindhand in an appointment with a woman. Pat was at the omnibus-bureau, which Harriet's prudent mind had selected, ten minutes before her, and had full time to pass in review the constantly changing stream of human beings that lively little stage affords, and use his sculptor's eye on them much to their general detriment. He did this all unconscious ; for in the bulk he intensely approved of the Parisian crowd, which at any moment could be trusted to amuse one of his idle hours—and Patrick allowed himself plenty.

Yet his eyes had been wonderfully busy, as was proved when Harriet did appear, by his dragging her off promptly to the Luxembourg Gallery, the nearest place where he could refresh his gaze on something beautiful in form and limb. They walked round the statues together in great accord, chattering without intermission of their personal affairs for the first half-hour, and discussing what was before them not at all. The museum was so full of people that it almost represented solitude ; for nobody

could pay attention to one special pair amid so many, especially as both had caught by a singular imitative art the exact air and allure of that quarter of busy bohemians. Pat's soft hat was pitched at an angle similar to that of three-parts of the young men in the building, and his brown hair was neither too long nor too short to be remarkable in his community. His build and soft blue eyes came in as usual for a little cordial notice on the part of the more inquisitive and tender-hearted people who had found seats, and had thus leisure to stare about them ; and a few cast on Harrie a passing glance of envy. Yet even so she earned not an instant's disdain, and even found some sympathy : for she matched her partner sufficiently, and played up to him well.

Occasionally the easy couple paused in their wandering and gazed a minute, still talking. Occasionally Harrie raised the steel point of her slim umbrella to guide her companion's eyes, and Pat, still talking, nodded. Once—it was over the lovely little crouching back of the Rodin Danaïde,—he jerked his modeller's thumb with a movement that approached a caress ; and two minutes after, as though the moment's impression had reminded him, he seized a pause, and turned the conversation to his work.

Harrie was intent at once ; for Pat, who had been constantly reminding her of her father, now came into the family, as it were, by strides. His definite, arrogant, uncompromising views on art, in almost ridiculous contrast with the soft drollery of his speech and expression ; his childish impatience

and annoyance with those who thought otherwise ; his equally naïve assumption in the beginning that all the world agreed with him, and that he was only, in the most extravagant statements, finding words for a popular view—were alike in a vein that brought all the past back to Harriet's clinging memory. Patrick, like Brian, was an aristocrat on that subject, and that subject alone ; for like Brian, though he boasted abnormally of his race and ancestors, his outlook on society, and his habit in it, was that of easy equality, with no pretension whatsoever. Pat made no demand on the world except to give him beauty, but of that he exacted a supply. If Paris failed in the commodity for a moment of the year, he took an expensive ticket into the country, and was hot on its tracks again. When tied by other distractions to the town, he nosed it out in the most unlikely places, and wasted half an hour admiring a sunbeam or the cloud-reflections in a puddle, when he had gone out to buy bread. He was one of those people—a class apart in humanity—who always hang on a river parapet ; and he knew the view by heart, in both directions, from every one of the seven-and-twenty bridges that Paris boasts. Harrie could see him, in her tender imagination, lounging with his soft hat crushed over his brow, and his soft eyes resting on the ever-flowing current beneath him, so much more useful than he, but which to him represented loveliness, and loveliness alone.

There was a practical side to Harrie's close attention too, as well as a sentimental one ; but she gained no clear assurance, from any of her cousin's

tirades, that the work of his heart was pecuniarily profitable. On the contrary, she was assured that it was impossible in Paris even to get adequate recognition, without a little balance at your bankers to help you on. There was 'Cupid in Exile,' for example, the nearest Patrick had ever come to a 'really straight expressive thing,' patiently awaiting a miracle for his translation into marble and the Salon. Patrick did not boast about his work extensively, but he 'had an idea' that Cupid would pass the critics without many words wasted, though there would be nothing fit for him to look at on arrival. Cupid, Harrie gathered, would bear this in order to be looked at himself; and seeing him through Patrick's eyes, she began to love him even as his creator did.

'He's in exile,' said Pat, with infinite sad expression, 'and so'm I, and so's you and all of us.' They stood at the top of the sculpture room and looked back upon it. 'Look round at this little roomful smirking, Harrie, all in their pretty whiteness. They came to their own with no fuss, because their owners had the ducats in pocket, no doubt. It troubles me at times to think that Cupid—of all boys in creation—has not got home. After all, there'd surely be a few to care for him.'

'So there would,' Harrie agreed, following his eyes to the innumerable holiday couples circulating affably in the hall. 'And there's no way of stretching to pay for his début, Patrick? He would not be as expensive as a girl.'

'The next,' said Patrick, his eyes coming to rest on her, 'will be a girl, very probably.'

‘I’m asking you in earnest,’ said Harrie.

‘The only way to stretch to pay him,’ said Pat, ‘would be to stretch my credit with Horn. And I’ve a notion he won’t stretch to it, to tell the truth. It’s a pity, but he’s beginning to see through me.’

‘How much do you owe him?’ said Harrie, frowning lightly as she had often frowned on Brian.

‘I meant to pay him some to-night,’ said Pat, giving a jingle to his pockets. ‘I’ve got my allowance come to me very timely. It’ll be some twelve hundred francs, I dare say, by now. Not but what he can stand it easy. He seems to have a banker that trusts him, Horn.’

‘A childhood’s friend, possibly,’ said Harrie. ‘Speaking sense, Patrick dear, does the money come to him, or has he done the work to earn it? I should like to know about Mr. Horn.’

‘Why?’ said Pat, his eyes strolling over her with untiring satisfaction.

‘Because I seem to have heard his name. It’s a name spoken of somewhere, I am sure.’

‘I do not know where it should be,’ said Pat, ‘unless in heaven, a place where I hope you will not go yourself just yet. Horn is a good man, with a heart as tender as a baby’s, and a voice in anger to which the King of England himself would give heed. He has written some books, they inform me, in the place he came from.’

‘Books?’ said Harriet. ‘I have had barely any time for English books. Did he ever write a magazine article?’

‘I’d be ready to be sure he did,’ said Patrick, ‘if you will be sure as well.’

‘ Ask him for me, then, Patrick : and you need not tell him I was enquiring.’

‘ But that will be the only part of it I’ll remember,’ protested the young gentleman.

‘ After all,’ said Harrie, as though to herself, ‘ you must learn some time to be useful. Come now, and let us go on an omnibus somewhere. My head is tired of this heat, and so many white things at once are worrying me.’

So they aired themselves on an omnibus, and either the keen east wind, or her thoughts, made Harriet silent. Presently Pat saw a shop-window which offered tea, and observed that the three letters drew him.

‘ What’s tea ? ’ said Harrie. ‘ I believe I’ve forgotten the smell of it.’

‘ Which is no doubt how you’ve not got a red nose,’ said Patrick. ‘ Have you ever looked at all the women in a tea-shop ? ’

‘ Naturally not, since it’s five years since I’ve drunk it.’

‘ Would you come back to it ? ’ said Patrick.

‘ With passion,’ said Harriet, ‘ as to all things Irish. The teapot on the hearth is where our exiles leave their heart, isn’t it ?—to keep it warm till they return.’

So the next time the omnibus stopped, they got down, and walked at leisure along an unknown boulevard till they found the tea-shop of their first choice. It may be remarked that they passed many other places, and better ones, so powerful is sentiment on the least occasion.

They were at first a party of three in the shop, for

there was an extremely friendly waiting-maid, and Patrick at least was not capable of the rudeness of repulsing her. She had missed her day out, it seemed, owing to some despotic ordinance : and Patrick wanted to know with whom she had been going to walk, and Harriet, what they paid her for the extra service. She thought them both delightful, but did not fail to charge them heavily, whether for the tea or her enlightening conversation.

There was a brisk war of words between the cousins over the bill, and then Harrie paid it. When it had disappeared, and the waitress also, Miss Clench leaned her elbows on the table, and looked in her companion's face.

'I want you to listen to me a moment,' she said, in her most capable manner. 'That money,' she indicated the coins he had laid out on the table, 'is Mr. Horn's. At least destined for him, and due. You've mentioned as much lately.'

'And what then ?' purred Patrick, whom tea had put in the best conceivable humour.

'You and me are all the family, all that's left of it at least, for the moment. I don't like you to be taking a stranger's money : I'd sooner you used mine.'

A pause. 'Have you got any ?' queried Pat : as it were, open to persuasion, but reserving a choice to his private sense of delicacy.

'I have some of my father's, and you're the first claimant on it, for he used your mother's, as you know. I'm to suppose you have heard that story.'

'You are to suppose it, mavourneen. But you

will not let it trouble you.' Pat became the picture of deprecating courtesy.

'I will not,' said Harrie, 'when the debt is fairly paid. Have you any means of knowing what it was?'

'None short of asking Brian: and it's not you or myself would do that. I have never,' added Pat, with obvious sincerity, 'thought at all about it.'

'If I had thought you had,' returned Harrie, 'I should not speak so freely.' She extended involuntarily the little right hand of friendship, and Pat grasped her bare fingers.

'Our situation,' she said, after a pause of eager thinking, 'is not quite common. Most people meet to make history, do they not? But you and me have history behind us. Do you feel it the same way?'

'Powerfully,' said the boy, dropping his long lashes. 'There are men behind us, and women you don't see now. When I think of them all—on my honour, Harrie, it's back, and not forward, I'd be going if I could. Whenever the noises stop, in this city or my first one, all the past is singing to me. Sometimes I might say, as you said that day we met, it's but the half of me that is here at all. The waste lot that we are!' He struck the marble table.

'I thought so,' the girl said, watching his downcast face intently. 'Only you must go forward, all the same. You shall not be waste, your mother's son. Listen now again and tell me. What steps have you now in front of you, that you could take?'

'Nothing but Cupid, and the English school.'

'The school is a fixture, is it not?'

‘Worse luck,’ he said, still not looking at her. ‘It’s got uglier by being certain, as things do.’

‘Well,’ said Harrie, ‘Cupid will not get uglier by being certain, and that certainty I can give you.’ The boy lifted his eyes, luminous suddenly. ‘You’d like it, wouldn’t you?’ she said. ‘He shall turn white, and step upon a pedestal, and I shall be proud to see to it. Once on exhibition, you may sell him, so it’s only—what is the word for money spent like that?’

‘I’ll tell you several,’ said Patrick, ‘when I begin to think, but there’s no word good enough I can lay tongue to at present.’ He laid his other hand on hers. ‘Oh, but now indeed I’ll have the heart to finish him,’ he said, and drowned her with his expressive gaze.

‘Finish?’ she cried, ‘but you must! He is to be the very best you can do in this life, before the other falls on you. Think of that and work to Easter as you have never worked. As for the good words, give them to Brian, for this is him, not me. Would not Brian launch your Cupid, if he was here? None readier, as you know, in a work like that.’

‘You make it better at every word,’ said Pat. ‘It’s as though himself were there. Speak low like that, and I’ll listen for ever.’

‘Listen to the sense,’ his cousin warned him. ‘I would make my voice like a corncrake’s if it would bring sense nearer to you. I shall give you the money as you need it,’ she added, having unlocked her hand, ‘and you will pay Mr. Horn a bit at a time, in the way that seems most natural. I wish you to be free of him, do you understand?’

‘ I follow,’ said Patrick, lifting his brows. ‘ But Horn’s a good fellow.’

‘ Just because of that, because he’s a true friend, and English, I wish you to be free. The English are not like us, in money things I mean——’ The girl, feeling ungrateful, stopped.

‘ Don’t you like Horn ? ’ said Pat, with a glint of eagerness.

‘ I do not know him.’ She coloured, and he misinterpreted the blush.

Though he played fast and loose with facts, Pat had a great tenacity for impressions ; and he set down in some corner of his mind, where impressions were safe to keep for years, that Harriet had an antipathy for Mr. Horn. It raised his spirits, in a manner he made no effort whatever to explain, beyond that in some way the consciousness cut the pair of them off more completely from the common world, and so left them nearer together.

‘ Are you two married ? ’ said the shop-girl, when Pat gave her his generous fee.

‘ Not yet,’ he replied.

‘ Never,’ said Harriet smoothly. ‘ We’re too near in blood. Had you not noticed we were brother and sister ? Well, to think of that.’

‘ That was a slap for me,’ said the young gentleman in the street, looking at her through his eyelashes.

‘ It’s my real feelings, and she drew them out of me. The question,’ said Miss Clench with decision, ‘ was impertinent.’

‘ You think she meant more ? ’

‘ They always do in this city. Their spoken word

swims in meaning, yet it hits its purpose clean. Our language,' added Harriet, with truth, 'is apt to go more roundabout.'

'You talk clever enough for a book when you forget,' scoffed Patrick. 'I'd tell that to Horn for his new piece, if I'd a chance to remember any of it.'

'Just in those ways,' said Harrie, coming nearer to confide, and taking his arm, 'in putting off rude people, and getting what I want, and making my way, I am clever. I've made myself be it, by practising.'

'You've wit enough to make the way for two,' said Pat, saying with his admirable carelessness exactly the right thing.

'That's what I've practised,' said Harrie, showing a little flush of excitement.

'You mean to be two, darlin' ? Well, it's not you that would have the difficulty.'

'I mean to be two, before many years are out. Pat, do you think I could bear it for ever, being left like this ? I must have him with me, I have determined it.'

'It's Brian,' said Patrick, disappointed. 'Well, so long as it's no other man, but one, and that's myself. How will you catch him, let me hear.'

'Oh, if I dared to tell you ! Some time I will.' She stopped, to shake and unfold her little umbrella, for it had begun to rain. She lifted her chin, and looked skywards, the shape of brow and jaw clean-marked under the sharp line of her hat. It was a grand look of mockery and defiance she presented to the last light of the wintry sky. Pat appreciated

it, as he appreciated the steely gleam thrown off here and there from wet patches of the rain-swept boulevard, along which sparse yellow lamps now returned an answering glow. He loved, as all do who have studied them, a great city street between the lights, its glass catching an unwilling sunset, its trees bending, and its pavements sleek with rain. And the little figure at his side was in tune with it, welcoming rain and wind, and night and day, good fortune and ill alike, so she could follow her course and see one desire clear at the end of it.

‘Come under the shelter,’ said Pat suddenly compassionate in the midst of his admiration. ‘It’s gusty, and you’ve not the strength to stand—not to mention your fine hat will be spoiled entirely.’

Harrie laughed, succumbed, and followed him. She had no notion where they were, and she greatly doubted if Patrick had either; but she did not intend to trouble herself to-night, the whole day’s adventure was too preposterous. She thought of Madame in her little office, of Geneviève in the kitchen, and her eyes danced gleefully. What would they say—what could they think—to see her here?

They stood together during the shower under a porte-cochère in the unknown street, and conversed with a stray cat that was also sheltering there, and noticed a rainbow through a space in the houses, and pursued easy theories as to where they were on the evidence of placarded omnibuses which passed them. Harrie did not refer to her interrupted confidence, but she was a little more absent than she

had been, and when the gleam of sun definitely died out, and the rain grew simultaneously lighter, she had the curious impulse to look at her watch.

‘What’s that for?’ said Pat, surprised.

‘The watch? For seeing the time.’

‘Who’s silly now? What are you thinking of, to look at the clock at all, unless it’s supper-time?’

‘I thought I might be home to supper. You see, the other maîtresse is out as well.’

‘That’s the more reason for you to be. Home to dinner, and you call that a day! Listen: you have to come to the Opera to-night with me.’

‘The Opera? Patrick dear, I cannot. I have not the money, nor the clothes for it, nor the time.’ She lifted a look to him, comically imploring.

‘I have the tickets,’ returned Patrick serenely. ‘And I’ve time for two as well, and your clothes will do. It’s only the little opera, and it’s not the grandest seats I’ve taken.’ He showed her the slips of paper, with a mixture of childish exultation and cajolery, almost irresistible.

‘It’s the hopeless boy you are,’ sighed Harrie, having ejaculated at the figure. ‘How can you and me afford that, standing as we are? Oh dear, oh dear, and who’s singing?’

Patrick told her, and what. ‘I should not have asked,’ said Harrie, her brows lifted and looking at the rain.

‘They’re nothing tremendous,’ said Pat, ‘but I thought you’d like it better than nothing to finish the day.’

‘Be quiet with your modesty. You’re as proud

of yourself as you can be. Why didn't you warn me ? '

' I was late to get them,' said Pat cheerfully. ' I tried for the " Rhine-gold," but all the seats were gone a week ago. That would have been brighter for you than Orpheus' lamenting. But it's a respectable piece,' he added, with a glint at her sidelong. ' Nice for a little girl to see in my company.'

' *Rheingold's* what the other mistress has gone to see,' said Harrie. ' But she got leave to wait for the last train. And I said I should certainly be home at nine to put the children to bed, for Madame is dining with her brother in Paris, and will fetch the Fräulein home.'

' And why should it be you ? ' said Pat.

' Well, I'm a lot younger than either of them,' said Harrie demurely. ' Bertha Lindt must be twenty-seven, and Madame's twice that. Besides, I'm there to be useful, that's my *raison d'être*.'

' Your what ? ' ejaculated Pat. ' I'll find you another if you leave me alone. *Raison d'être* indeed, the ideas you have ! It'll be time enough when you're ninety to be useful, I hope.'

' I doubt it'll be too late, then,' said Harrie ; but her smile was surrender. ' It won't be so late as the big opera after all,' she murmured, ' and I can go before the ballet. I dare say I'll catch the train before the last.'

' You shall catch any train you wish,' said Pat, with most cheerful optimism, ' or all of them, so long as you do not think or trouble about it, at the time or now.'

'I must go and buy some gloves,' Harrie observed to herself. 'The expense you put me to, wicked boy.'

'I'll go and buy them with you. I'd like to buy you gloves,' said Patrick. 'And after that we'll dine at a good place. Now let us consider what we shall have for dinner, you and me.'

VII

GEOFFRY HORN dined with a friend, a critic on some paper. When invited to help fill a box at the Opéra Comique, in order to pass judgment on a new Alsatian contralto, he agreed with some unwillingness. His play was teasing him, as such things do, and the blank which the little Vanessa had filled in its personnel seemed to crave for occupation. Geoffry was aware of this craving, and little else. It was no remedy for such hungry discontent to go and see other people enjoying themselves. He preferred to return and mope at home. There was always the chance, too, that Morough had got back from his outing, and was inclined to talk about it. Morough was an amusing fellow, especially when he had had a pleasant day.

So pondering, Horn declined the invitation absently: and then, seeing his friend's face, changed his mind and accepted. It seemed poor Vauthier was alone, which he had not realised; and after all, the singer might conceivably be able to do justice to the music. She hailed at least from the German side of France.

As things turned out, the entertainment soothed him. The Gluck public is not a noisy one, and—as was fitting to Orpheus' shadowy story—house and stage were continuously dark. The singer was not

first-rate, and M. Vauthier had enough after the second act, and determined to retire to the 'Variétés,' whither he invited his companion to attend him—fruitlessly.

'Oh, well,' said Vauthier with a shrug, 'then, all I can say is, you had better find a little lady to fill my seat—hein?' He looked at Horn's long melancholy figure with affection, for he liked him. Horn could both listen and talk, a combination of qualities which is, after all, very rare.

'The little lady is already in occupation,' said Horn. 'I may mention she is coming back, Jacques, thanks to your company and Elysian melody.'

'You and your Vanessas,' scoffed Vauthier, who was in his confidence. 'It's my dinner you have to thank, more likely. You should eat more, my friend, or these abstractions never will come true. Come and get a drink before parting, hey?'

Horn went agreeably, being used to the necessity of changing place often and rapidly in Vauthier's company; the only thing he refused to change was his mood. He was dreamy, and Vauthier scoffed at him in vain. He did not even trouble to study the couples scattered about at the little tables of the buffet, though they occupied a retired corner excellently adapted for spying. Vauthier made the best of his chances, and interspersed his friend's monologue on his peculiar view of stagecraft with a running commentary on the company. Only when the bell rang for the last act, and the hall began to clear, had he leisure really to attend to Horn and his lay-figures, which seemed ever to that strange person more alive, more momentous, more

serious in their significance and the destiny they fulfilled, than any of the merry throng flirting about him, at which he refused to look.

Nor did Horn seem in a hurry to return to Gluck's private dream-world on the stage. From where he sat the music was very soothing, being sufficiently distant to veil its faults in execution. Horn was a bit of an exquisite, and after a long and mixed experience, still showed shyness in attending the performance of that select circle of things he really loved. The story went of him that on a gala opera-night, when the first of the 'Ring-cycle' was to be given, he had begun by turning his back on the stage; after an interval he had then stopped his ears, quite absently, and remained to the end of the act with his eyes on the score. At the close he agreed with his neighbours that the music was wonderfully persuasive, and left the theatre, to everybody's satisfaction and chiefly his own. Yet this story, or as much of it as was true, belonged to his youth; and the years that had intervened had brought tolerance with them. He had at least some small personal knowledge of the crowd of poor earnest artists, more cramped and hustled as one went down the ladder, and often more deserving also. The heaven of his private ideal had not disappeared, but it had enlarged its gates to take into account humanity, each member of it fighting for an ideal as sweet to them as his had been once to him, and many of whom had staked and lost far more than he had ever ventured in the strife.

For Geoffry Horn, in spite of small ups and downs of fortune, had been incorrigibly prosperous.

Money, the key to almost all the beauty of life, clung firmly to him, generously though he handed it out to all who needed help. Being a just man, this abiding sense of possession had also lent him humility in regarding the crowd, among the toiling and scuffling masses of which his art found its material. Had he been now in a pawn-shop, instead of this gilded pleasure-house of the bourgeoisie, he would have been less inattentive to his surroundings. It was only the eternal theme of vanity wearied him rather, and turned his mind for pasture in upon itself.

‘ Well, I must be going,’ said Vauthier at last. ‘ It would need more time than I can spare to prove you wrong. You will appreciate the desire, mon cher, nevertheless. Your view of women in itself — Saprستي ! who is that ? ’

Horn started at the same moment, for the little electric thrill he felt in Vauthier’s arm stirred him as such symptoms do.

‘ What now ? ’ he said.

‘ That girl—of all midnight marvels ! American, is she ? She must be American, to be alone.’

Then Horn saw her, and knew that his Vanessa had come to life indeed. A slight pale girl in black, with a white-winged hat slung on her arm, had stepped into the now open space and approached the buffet. Nothing remained of the throng, for the last act had started, but a group of young men drinking round a table and leaning on the counter. Neither of the friends in their retired corner could hear for what she asked, for her voice was low. But they saw the waitress stare, the group of men

pause open-mouthed, and the waiters whisper and rake her insolently with their eyes. Before it could reach the next stage of muttering or mockery, Geoffry Horn was on his feet. He disentangled his long limbs from the impeding furniture with a clatter, and went forward with swift steps to her side.

‘Miss Clench, you will allow me,’ he said, using French with the instinct of diplomacy. ‘A glass of water, is it? Kindly serve this lady quickly, and bring us our addition. The gentleman has to go.’

‘Bien sûr he has to,’ muttered the admiring Frenchmen. ‘But he speaks well, the long American. It was neatly done, upon my word.’

Geoffry had no more need of their approval than their criticism. He disdained it for himself and loathed it for Harrie. She looked, he thought, extraordinarily pale, and he was tormenting all his faculties to conceive how she should come there, lonely and left by Patrick, her true knight. Tired as she plainly was however, her eyes had not lost their spark, nor her wits their resourcefulness. She did not start at Horn’s intervention, nor express surprise, but greeted him with a slight smile, as at a familiar friend new found. He brought her back to his own retired table, and presented her to the astounded though rapturous Vauthier. Horn really was ‘impayable,’ Vauthier had been deciding; with the English, at least the English of his make, nothing was impossible. They did all things, whether in character or hopelessly out of it, with the same bland, immovable front. Here was Horn, the hermit, whose amusement was a paper stage,

attaching to himself a real girl, in the most neat and dramatic manner conceivable, without a wink or a blush. He just annexed her, and brought her along, in order to prove Vauthier at all points wrong about him. In the rush of these perplexed and admiring sensations, the young man was only sure of one thing, which was that his own retreat had sounded.

‘Enchanted,’ he murmured, delicately bowing, and retiring as he did so. He hardly looked at Miss Clench, but he knew her, as afterwards appeared in his descriptions, from the tip of her little shoe to the last feather of her hair. She looked at him quite absently, for her inner distress was asserting itself. It needed a minute, even after Vauthier’s departure, for her to choose and find a seat. Then, while Horn fussed among the glasses, she was able to collect herself, and grip her thoughts again.

‘You think it’s odd of me to be here,’ she said, in her worn little tone at last.

‘Not at all,’ said Horn at random. ‘Delighted. Quite a dramatic encounter.’

‘There you’re mistaken,’ said Harrie, gathering force. ‘Dramatic’s no word. It’s quite an ordinary thing that has happened, but of course it needs explaining.’

‘They have quarrelled,’ thought Horn. ‘Oh, my prophetic soul, the Irish!’ But he said, ‘There is no need to explain anything for me, Miss Clench. You are too tired, for one thing.’

‘Well,’ she said, in the pause. ‘And what’s the other?’

'I,' said Horn, blushing, 'am not worth explaining to. I mean, I am just a bystander, there to be useful, as I said before.'

She bowed her fair head, a very little. 'You were useful a minute since,' she said. 'I admit it, and I thank you.'

'You said you collected the useful people,' said Horn, wondering how he dared to say it. 'If you will just collect me, and count on me, it's all I ask.'

'Oh,' she cried, protesting, 'as if I ever meant, useful to me! Excuse me if I defend my word, but it's not so easy to be collectable as that.' She rested her head upon her hands. 'It's silly I am,' she murmured vaguely, her eyes searching the hall as though for possible escape.

Horn's heart beat madly, with pity and rage, but he kept his front of serenity. He seized any attainable generalities to give her time, for he really feared she might faint.

'I count society as a pie,' he observed, 'or a pudding, shall we say? Some bring plums to it, some sugar and spice—some salt—some build up the solid substance, some leaven it with merriment. Few but can add a grain to its goodness, and none but can at least give things a stir. Am I talking nonsense?'

'No,' she said. 'You have my idea. To stir is the thing.' She seemed watching him round her hand rather nervously. Horn realised that he had taken her aback, this resourceful little woman, just as he had at their first meeting. Whatever her quaint philosophy was, she could not work him in.

Her eyes seemed enquiring, shyly curious, ringed with genuine fatigue as they were to-night.

‘To stir is the thing. Whatever you do,’ said Geoffry, admiring himself, ‘you mustn’t stand aside and say the whole is useless muck, and there are better receipts for making it.’

‘No,’ she agreed again. ‘After all, they never have, the great ones, have they?’

‘And,’ he concluded, rolling the remnant of liqueur in his glass, ‘you must not, whatever you do, spend all the time nibbling at the paste.’

‘Not all,’ she assented, and sighed. ‘Oh, you know, then, it’s all right. How did I come here, at all, to talk to you?’

In the blank pause, a distant ineffable cadence of Gluck’s pure melody reached them. It fell into Horn’s dream, and he thought eternity spoke.

‘Listen,’ said Harrie, ‘I am going to tell you, and you can judge me silly as you like. Only you never know where the commonest things will lead you, and mine have led me here. . . . Patrick is just Brian, Mr. Horn, and I know him—I may say I have known him for years. You cannot judge for the Brian sort like for other people. He’s been angry with me, and doubtless Brian would have been as well. At dinner first he got excited, for we talked of old things, and the dinner he chose was very good. Then I told him how I must take the early train, how it is necessary to my position, and disputing it uplifted him the more. When we got here the chorus calmed him a little, as indeed it would calm souls condemned. That music is collectable, Mr. Horn,’ she diverted, ‘for it has done

nothing but good since it first blew into the world. It's not all music you can say that of, is it ? '

' It's very little,' said Horn.

' I think so. Well, where was I ? ' Her brow knit above the downcast eyes he watched. ' In the entr'acte we walked out to get cool, and I found the poor thing—I mean the other mistress that I know at Versailles. She has been dismissed, and has nothing to live on but her genius, which is not worth a sou to her naturally. She lived through an awful week for the sake of hearing the performance of " Rheingold " to-night ; but she got confused with going round the registry offices all day, and stupid with it, and having got to the opera-house over there, she found she'd lost her ticket.'

Horn made a sound, for suddenly he saw.

' Yes, I need hardly tell you, need I ? Those things happen to the people who can least afford it, I mean in any way. All the people who go to " Rheingold " to show their clothes had their tickets tight in their gloves. As for her, she was nearly frantic. She ran on here, for it starts a little later, and paid I don't know what for a ridiculous seat. If I had known she should not have been so cheated. So up she went to the sky, and tried from there to hear the music that is her right—that is surely her right as a musician, Mr. Horn. But she couldn't for the people chattering outside, and the heat inside which made her sick. So down she came in the interval to where I found her crying in the foyer.'

' And you gave her your seat for the last act.'

'I did, when I had got Pat round. He is very good-hearted, when you get at him. I could not have got Brian to it so soon.'

'Didn't he offer to give up his own seat, Miss Clench?'

'He was ready, but that I would not. Two girls, we should have been found out and bothered, Bertha being what she is and unable to keep still: but he being a man can manage it.' The girl paused, breathing deeply, as at the recollection of the struggle past. 'He'll be tired of her by now,' she said, 'and his kindness too. I said perhaps I would stay for him, but as things are, I shall have to go and catch my train.'

'How long did you stay up there?' demanded Geoffry.

'Not long,' she said. 'There's no air at all, she's right. But I wanted to wait for the other Air—the Aria—if I could.' She paused again a minute, listening. 'Not that the woman could sing it,' added Harrie, in her lower sweeter tone.

'The woman' was singing at the minute; distant echoes and cadences reached them, and Horn saw the girl's fine throat work, though the expression of her eyes was still veiled.

'You sing, don't you, Miss Clench?' he said.

'Chut,' she answered, glancing once. 'I do—that is, I shall.'

'Is that your secret?'

'One of them. How did you know it? I have longed to tell many people and couldn't, Patrick among them.'

'I don't count,' said Horn.

'You mean I can just talk to you, like the furniture? Oh, the blessing it would be to have somebody like that when I am vexed with things. . . . I don't know what my voice is worth,' she said, still low and rapidly. 'I may be wrong about it altogether, but Brian will know. I shall never sing till I can sing right, and sing to him. I have no use for a voice but that, to catch and keep Brian. It's a net, just a little net I've made——' She was using her loveliest low tone as she spoke, and had half risen, her eyes on him sidelong.

'You do not mean you are going,' he said. 'Pat will never forgive you.'

'It's my train—and my head. I might as well tell you. I cannot get in to tell him: nor could anyone, however useful by nature, unless the police. I am just going away, and I am sure from all points of view it is better so.'

'Is she afraid of him?' thought Geoffry. He had an idea. 'If you wait a little, Miss Clench, Pat could escort you to the station, and I could escort your friend.'

'Oh, dear'—she gazed, brows up—'and what would Madame say, seeing us all? For Madame will be at the station too. No, I'll be good and go home by the eleven-thirty. I'm determined it's better. I ought never to have come at all.'

'Are you sorry that you did?'

'Sorry?—with that first act in my ears? It was a Clench thing to do, however, for my duty lay before me plain.'

'If you had not come,' said Horn, following her

slowly, as she retreated to arrange her hat, 'you could not have helped Fräulein Lindt.'

'I have not helped her, to mention. I ought to have done much more, seeing how she's placed. I had forgotten quite about her when I saw her there, and her poor eyes reproaching me. Do not come, Mr. Horn,'—she paused at the top of the stairs. 'The aria will be beginning.'

'I have no wish to hear it.'

'You should, then. She'll do it better than the rest, for she'll have studied it for her last effect. Do the poor woman justice. Go and do it, will you not?'

As she looked at him, the spark in her eye became a smile, yet he felt the will of this child of seventeen very keenly.

'I could get you a cab,' he pleaded.

'I can get all the cab I want. Now you will make me miss my train, disputing with you. Didn't I go about New York at nine years old? I am quite a'—she hesitated and took the usual word—'practical person.'

Geoffrey touched the hand she extended, and was going, when he glanced back in spite of himself. Harriet had settled her veil, gathered up her skirts, and was preparing to descend. Very small and black she looked in that colossal, dazzling place, deserted as it was, but for the theatre servants at the door.

'Will you excuse my saying one thing, Miss Clench,' murmured Horn, leaning on the rail.

Harrie looked round, one hand on her skirt which was lifted deftly off the stairs. He took the picture

of her look, brows oddly raised and lips together, while he spoke ; but he spoke firmly none the less.

‘ You are simply the most romantic person I ever met.’

VIII

PATRICK, deserted by his cousin, was exceedingly sulky in Fräulein Lindt's company for exactly five minutes, and then she and he made simultaneously the same remark on a fine phrase, and he discovered that she was a person of what he called 'sense'—that is, sensibility. When he first saw her, wrapped in heavy gloom, her hat knocked crooked in the crowd, and her large blunt-fingered hands twitching with agitation as she gripped and explored a clumsy beaded bag, Pat thought, especially with the contrast of his little Harrie beside her, that he had never seen such a scarecrow. But the sympathy of the soft-tongued pair, and the certainty of her music, had metamorphosed Bertha in a few minutes. She took her hat off, put on her gloves, and became beaming and confidential. Seen side-face she was not too ill-favoured; and when she spoke in lowered tones to Pat of his cousin's angel-nature, and his own affability in adopting the exchange, he began to see why Harriet had collected her. Over the music, her claims became yet more clear. Her taste and judgment had a delicacy which her appearance and manner lacked. She contradicted Pat and spurred him; she nodded with fervour a dozen times at his witty commentary on the acting, a light in her eye, and a broad finger on

her lips. She was, in short, barring her unfortunate features, a good companion and a clever woman. Patrick only remembered to sigh for the truant Harrie at intervals, till the great crisis on the stage was over, love triumphant, and the scene changed for the ballet. Then he apologised and said he must go : giving as a reason, when pressed, that Cupid was a friend of his, and he could not see him travestied. Fräulein Lindt's eyebrows lifted to her hair, as she regarded him, drinking in his aspect.

'You would rejoin the beloved Miss,' she interpreted with her ponderous sincerity.

'That is what I meant,' said Patrick, 'more or less.' He leant with one knee on the seat, his roguish eyes flashing over her, marvelling whether the strange animal she looked could reach the meaning of his situation, as well as that of the music on the stage.

'You love her,' murmured Fräulein Lindt. 'Ah, but you must—and she needs kindness so.'

'Are they not good to her there?' said Patrick.

'Not as we others understand it,' said the Swiss woman. 'Also, all the kindness Miss your cousin receives, she gives away again full-handed. It is love, real love, she needs.' Fräulein Lindt clenched her powerful hands, speaking her own language, which Pat understood sufficiently.

'Good night, Fräulein Lindt,' he said, a spark in his eye. 'You're well in the right of it. I am happy to have met you, if only for this short time.'

'You and she have made my happiness——' Bertha was preparing to vociferate : but he was gone. So she merely wiped her eyes, smiled broadly once

on vacancy, and proceeded to devote herself solidly to the last sweet dregs of her cup of pleasure.

Harriet, meanwhile, had missed the train before the last at Montparnasse, and resolved, in view of the probable incursion of Madame Barrière if she waited, to take the tram-route instead from the Louvre terminus. To come across Madame in a public station, and be scolded for truancy in a train, was too hard a thing to bear in prospect, more especially as Pat himself might at any moment break in upon the colloquy, and Harrie had no wish at all for Madame to see her and Pat together.

So, with a little moue of forced patience at the perversity of things, she took her decision, and was transported to the quays, whence she walked to the omnibus-bureau, and, sitting demurely on a bench, looked out for her tram. Fortune was steadily against her, for one Versailles car had just gone out, and while she watched patiently for the next one, a dear friend of Geneviève's who had also been to the play and was returning to Montreuil, walked into the office.

Harrie, who felt unequal to the task of being continuously agreeable, still less confidential, with this young person, presently seized a chance to slip out of the crowded little cabin and stand upon the bridge. It was not so decorous, of course, but infinitely more beautiful as a waiting-place. Few spots are more suggestive of romance than the Pont des Arts on a moonlit night : and this was a night sweet to Harrie's Irish instincts, coldish and windy, with long rags of blown cloud which never

quite left the moon's face clean, though she seemed here and there, near or far, to catch a burnished point of river or city tile in which to wink reflectively. Meanwhile, under the light bridge the river swirled, shouldered, and muttered past, plotting many rebellious pranks, doubtless, if the rainy season would only persist a little. Ensnared by the charm that only big rivers know, Miss Clench watched it, leaning a little bare hand on the railing, and singing through the water-noises all unconscious to herself.

'And is it singing to the Seine-maidens you are?' said the voice of the graceless one beside her.

'Oh, Patrick!' she cried, swerving with a start that was almost cruel. 'Here, you bad boy? Did you not stop with Bertha to see her safe?'

'She'll be safe,' Patrick asseverated, 'with a face like that on her. It's yourself I was concerned about purely, and have been since you left my side. Harrie, darling, and did the Seine-maidens like the song?'

He was on fire with elation and excitement at the success of his last manœuvre. She felt rather than saw it plainly. He was in his most dangerous, most charming, most impish mood, and she was all alone with him, on the open bridge, at twelve o'clock. Tired as she was, she knew she must set her wits to work again, or all the impression she had made at infinite pains throughout the strenuous day would be undone in a rush of his uncontrollable spirits.

'How did you find me?' she cried.

'I just took my chance,' he said. 'I knew the luck was good to-night by the twinkle of the moon.'

You weren't at the West Station when I got there, so I thought I'd try some others, and looked in here on the way to them. It is not the night for train-riding, after all. I might have known you'd be on the bridge.'

'How could you know I was before you?' she cried.

'Oh, that,' he said easily. 'A fellow at the door had seen you go.'

'Noticed me?' cried the little woman.

'Noticed the wings of you,' laughed Patrick with a pretty gesture, 'our little bird. And now it is a singing-bird, which had never struck me at all, though I knew it all along.' He put an arm about her as she stood. Harrie trusted fervently she would not be spied by Mlle Durand. She stood quietly, and frowned at the fleeing water, seeking with all her wits to check his mood. The Pont des Arts is unlike other bridges: there is not a shadow on all its length. They were in far too public a position even to dispute gaily as they had done all day. Retreat on the Louvre side was impossible, for he would certainly follow her, and the bulky tram was approaching the bureau. She must stand where she was, watch Mlle Durand climb in, and slip into a place at the last moment, as far from her as possible. Meanwhile she must quench Patrick by some means.

'The Seine-maidens are fat,' she said drily, 'and their river's dirty. They have no singing-voice like the ladies in the Rhine; and as for a treasure to keep, they're occupied in storing sous for the rag-pickers of the Latin Quarter. I shouldn't wonder if they pick them out of the pockets of those who sink.

Scraping—not singing—that's the spirit of the Seine.'

'You're heartless now,' Pat murmured; 'and if I believed you thought what you were saying—but I do not. They're not such bad girls, at all, I tell you, and they're better-dressed than their German cousins—and as for their song, you have but to stand against me here, and give ear to what they're repeating.' He was pressing behind her, until she clutched the bridge-rail not to shrink from him. 'You're ungrateful too, darlin',' he whispered, 'for it was just there they saved my life for me under the bridge.'

'Your life?' she gasped, with a start he felt. 'Pat, you are surely romancing. I am silly to believe you, and there is my tram going to move. I have to go.'

'It's not the last one,' Pat cajoled her.

'It is. I heard them saying so at the bureau.'

'It is not, mavourneen, because I enquired; a man with a braided hat that knew about it and reassured me very agreeably. There is another one soon, within the hour, that will suit you well.' He clasped her arm with a hand whose power she realised, and pressed her to his side. She hoped he did not feel the hammering of her heart.

'Patrick,' she said, low and pleading, 'I have to go.'

'How long is it,' he teased, 'since you said that first to me, at dinner while the band played that fine waltz to us? And how long is it since I first said you had to stay? There are musts by day, for the people that will make them, but never under the moon.'

Harrie watched the train of well-lighted cars move away, slow but insidious, like a bulky ark of respectability, and within it Mlle Durand, Geneviève's bosom-friend. Of course it was better that lady should go, if there was another tram to follow ; but she had little faith in Patrick at this juncture, and seeing the lights retreat along the quays, her heart sank curiously.

'Running I can catch it,' she murmured. 'It will stop again. Patrick—Mr. Morough—listen : if you love my honour, let me go.'

'Your honour, little one ?' he laughed. 'Mr. Morough has it in his care.'

'I have given my word to be back.' Her voice shook, for indeed his tone had been childish. 'There's honour in the professions, and I'm a professional woman.'

'Well, I'll keep the woman,' said Patrick promptly, 'and we'll let the professional go. Harrie, you are not anxious to get back to that rat-hole, not in the heart of you.'

'My God,' she muttered in French, 'and are all Clenches mad completely ? What am I to say to him that he'll believe ?'

'I'll believe all,' the boy cried low and swiftly, 'but that you want to leave me. Now I have found you out, in this great trap of a world, why should we part again ? The trick was not worthy of the race we share, to cast me off as you did to-night. It was not yourself that did so, Harrie, for you must know by now that my heart is yours. Can I be wanting you, Brian's own little daughter that bears his name ? Do you know what himself has been to

me? Do you know what Kathleen was? Have you their whole story in mind, when Ireland held us all in the beautiful days, that you can take a steam-tram to separate us, on this of all nights in the year?’

She merely clenched her hands and bowed her head. Resources were slipping from her, and she would not own it. She still held herself motionless, for she felt that a movement would madden him, but her eyes, under an anxious brow, were searching the many moving lights of the neighbouring Place, as she hoped against hope to see another tram arrive. But deep in her heart she knew the last was gone, and she alone with him in this monstrous capital of Paris.

‘What were you singing lately on the bridge?’ said Pat, ever lower and more silyly sweet. ‘“Che faro,” was it not, in a voice your father would have followed. “Que ferai-je sans Euridice,” Harrie—what will I do without her, now and along my life? I was thinking that already in the play, when the Orpheus-boy was searching, and the pretty ladies passed him by. They would have none of him, would they, not a wink or a smile even, in passing, for they knew he was set on one. Harrie, there have been many girls I have known up to now, shadows of shades all of them—but henceforward there is one. I tell you it, for I know. When I saw you under the sun of the gardens, so little and proud and fair, my heart stood still in my side. Would you know that moon in the sky from the moon in the water, darlin’? That is how it will be with me, the one real thing where few things in the world

are real. Do not say I am protesting. The blood in my veins may be against me, but I am sure it will be so. I'll live loving you, and it will be loving you I'll die.'

Still Harriet stood near him, thinking hard. Was she frightened? She hardly knew, her excitement was such pain. In the loneliness of her life, it was sweet unspeakably to be 'two' at last, and she felt springing in her at each of his low words the Celtic kinship of soul, the network of ancient sympathy that drew them close together. How could she fear a tongue like that, that brought the best things of her past so near? She had more fear of herself, indeed, for a rebel-leap of her blood betrayed her, with his soft speech, and the river-murmur, and the witchery of the night. She might scoff as recently, and shield herself with the grim realities of Paris, but Paris of all towns casts away after sunset all that makes for reason or for right. She watches lovers above all with an easy sympathy, a smile of endless tolerance, as though to assure that the lover's toll is lighter there than in any other city they could choose. Harriet was a child, but a child of impression and impulse, and owing to her father's failings, she had begun to live very early. Her breath she felt coming in long gasps, the river-song entangling her—she knew she had to guard herself, and soon.

'Patrick,' she said quietly, not to clash with his mood. 'We have had a lovely day, a day to remember, you and me. You would not spoil it for me now.' Her tired little tone had a tremble that was almost babyish, but its stillness served. 'You

would not hurt me really,' she said, 'would you—Kathleen's son.'

'Me? If I hurt a hair of you, I would throw myself under that bridge, as I have done once before. The Seine-girls should have me for supper,' he cried, 'and welcome to the feast.'

'I thought you would not,' said Harrie. 'Then you will walk with me now to that omnibus-house, and you will ask the man if indeed it was the last tram, and there's no way left of getting to Versailles.'

'I will,' said Patrick, moved by her tone, 'if you will say you do not hate me first.'

'Oh, my dear, I do not,' she said. 'You are only one of them.' Her quaint eyebrows lifted, and she turned up to him a straight glance. It was dangerous, for Orpheus himself could not have been more charming in the moonlight than was Kathleen's scapegrace son.

'Do you ask me to care for you,' Miss Clench enquired, 'in that same way, after a day's acquaintance?'

'I'd ask it always, but I'd never expect.' The boy's tone grew keenly sadder, as he leant upon the bridge. 'It's the great good thing I am seeking in your love, the thing of which my mother warned me. I must find the horse to ride, mavourneen: but when I get him, there'll be room for two. You little strange fairy,' he said, holding her at arm's length with gentle fingers. 'I'd never ask you to come to me, except in your own way. I have only held you here awhile, while the time was true for it, to tell you what I must tell, the thing that was

aching in me. Now you will not go far from me, Harrie : you will not do that ? ’

‘ Not for long,’ she said, with wonderful steadiness, for her thoughts were whirling again, and she was near to tears. He had no purpose to harm her, no cunning to deceive, his very caresses carried no menace that she need fear. Some absurd, ancient strand of honour, the thin vein of silver in a royal race, made the woman and the kinswoman she was—she a schoolgirl of seventeen—all to him, put her little foot upon his neck. He was nothing but a dog, most soft of heart, most passionate for service, most utterly reasonless in the manner and time he chose to show it. And—like a dog—one could not be angry with him. So Harrie felt, while she was half-crying with mingled remorse, irritation, and anxiety.

She thought, indeed, there was no more than this in her feelings ; only as she moved and he followed her, she held a hand clutched at her side. She knew not what it was, but something had shifted there, and it was not pity or anger only that she felt. The stronghold of her youth was shaken, by this, her first passionate declaration of love. Her blood was coursing differently, she felt a shyness of herself. The daylight would doubtless set things right, solve the vast impending problem that was shadowing her, curb the new tide of troubling life, and make Clench’s daughter ‘ practical ’ again. It was to be expected—it was to be hoped, indeed—that daylight would.

‘ What will you do ? ’ said Patrick easily, when they had ascertained beyond further question that

all trams and trains were gone. 'Will I take a little carriage at the corner there, and drive you out in it?'

'You will not,' said Harrie, 'with my purse empty and yours. Do you consider at all what it would cost, at this hour of the morning, to drive to Versailles?'

'I am considering it,' he said, catching remorse from her troubled tone. 'It is not to be thought of, darling, that it should cost you anything, now or ever, to be good to me.' He looked at the water. 'The thing to be done is always there, if one can catch hold of it,' he said.

'I have done so,' said Harriet.

'And so have I,' returned her cavalier. 'It is the same idea we have, at the same moment entirely. We go together to my lodging, to the Englishman Horn. He will not be gone to bed, I am sure, for his habit is—— And why are you laughing?'

She had only laughed a single thrill, and her head sank into the little comforter she threw round her chin.

'They're mad,' she murmured into it, 'the dear things, completely mad. Mr. Horn, indeed, of all names to pick out in this life or the next. . . . Patrick, you'll obey me now, for I need it.' Clearing a little sob of laughter from her throat she spoke steadily. 'I am tired of the day, and shall not be sensible long.'

'I am yours, darling,' said Patrick, puzzled and troubled more and more.

'Do you know a hôtel, then, not on this side but the other, that is cheap and quiet for a girl alone?'

'A *hôtel* ?'

'Yes. You must think for me, and quickly. I have not been much in the town.'

He was silent.

'Do you know one, Pat ?' she pleaded, after waiting. 'Are you thinking really ?'

'To be sure,' he murmured, 'but it's Horn would remember the names.'

'I will not go to Mr. Horn,' said Harrie sharply. 'I will not see his face.'

'Indeed,' said Pat, 'he is not what you think.' Her hand was on his arm, and her troubled brow was raised to him. 'Harrie,' he said, 'I will find the one I know, though the name's gone from me. It will not be hard to find, over there in the little streets.'

'It is not far to walk ?' she said faintly, clasping to her side the slight store in her bag.

'Not far, no. I have thought of that. I have thought,' he assured her eagerly, 'of all the things. Are you not the most precious thing in the world to me, that I should let you set your foot in a wrong place ?'

It was reassuring—so far as it went. She was really too tired to debate it, and had to trust him throughout, since she had trusted him already so far.

They went together, and in silence, across the swirling, muttering river that is the heart of Paris. Harrie might have thought—had not all imagination been drowned in weariness—that the Seine was disappointed.

IX

‘AND what do you wish, Miss Clench,’ said Madame Barrière, in a manner of pathos that was rather over-acted, ‘that I should think of this?’

Madame Barrière was never a beautiful object in her morning déshabillé, still less when she had come home late, and enjoyed herself a little too much the night before. Added to this, Fräulein Lindt had kept her waiting at the station, and they had nearly missed the train. Madame’s nerves, always delicately susceptible, had been absolutely rasped by Fräulein Lindt’s calm behaviour—she a subordinate already dismissed, to whom Madame had offered the priceless advantage of her countenance for the journey home from Montparnasse, at an hour when respectable governesses should have been in bed. She had talked at length to Fräulein Lindt on the homeward way, and, as Harrie had too soon to discover, Fräulein Lindt had talked as well.

‘I missed the train,’ the girl said, with rather a sleep-walking utterance. ‘And the tramway.’

‘And how,’ said Madame, ‘did you succeed in doing that, when you left the theatre a full half-hour previous to Fräulein Lindt?’

‘I had to decide which to make for,’ said Harrie, ‘and I decided on the tram. I missed it, that is all.’

‘Ha, but is that all?’ said Madame, with unpleasant humour. ‘It is possible you had not heard

that I was travelling by the midnight train? Thus I could have convoyed you respectably, had you cared for it.'

'I had heard it mentioned,' the girl said, frowning slightly. She felt tired and stupefied a little, after her adventure of the night, and an early ride to Versailles. She had not even breakfasted, preferring to come direct to Madame. Also, the armour her short experience had prepared against attack seemed now singularly insufficient and thin. She had not expected this dry aspect in the schoolmistress, as though Madame was moving politely through forms, over a tacit understanding with an experienced sinner. It froze her with nervousness of she knew not what to come.

'Where did you pass the night?' said Madame, lightly as it were, her steely eyes roaming about the room.

'In a hôtel in the Rue Racine. 'Here,' said Harrie, tossing it down, 'is its card.' Madame did not even deign to examine this poor device.

'With whom,' she pursued, 'did you pass the day?'

'I think you know,' said the girl, rousing a little. 'It is a pity to ask me what you know already.'

'Answer me,' said Madame, folding her hands.

'I was with my cousin. We had arranged it.'

'Your cousin lives—where?'

Harriet told her. 'He is studying sculpture,' she added.

'Sculpture,' said Madame. 'You had arranged it—when?'

'When I saw him here on Sunday.'

‘Yes,’ said Madame. ‘The gentleman is an agreeable personage, I hear.’

‘I am glad Fräulein Lindt found him agreeable,’ said Harrie.

‘That will not serve you,’ said Madame suddenly. ‘You think to persuade me you were three, unaware that I know all the truth.’

Harriet had never hoped that Bertha, that truthful flounderer, would not tell all the truth when pressed by a cunning tongue. She knew enough of both women for that, though she did not tell Madame so.

‘We were not three, indeed,’ she murmured. ‘It’s pairs that have done the harm.’

‘What’s that you’re saying?’ said Madame, who heard. She gathered her forces, and flicked the lace trimmings of her morning-gown. The bracelets she liked to carry on her stout arm continually caught in a ragged portion of the lace. This impeded gesture, and Madame liked her gesture to be free.

‘Mademoiselle,’ she said, with authority, and her most studied air. ‘I have no wish to be hard on you. But you are my daughter’s age, and I judge instinctively as I should judge her in a like case; in a like case,’ repeated Madame, ‘if a like case were possible. You have preserved a good character till now; you have lived down, in a manner I can approve, a certain reputation.’

‘What reputation?’ said Harrie.

‘Not entirely of your fault or of your making,’ the preceptress pursued, ‘though you have defied me at times as you know.’

So Brian was to be in it too—not only Bertha and Pat. For the first time the girl's pale cheeks glowed, for she was too quick not to guess the insinuation. That cheerful hour Brian had spent, so greatly to his own contentment, so little to the benefit of Madame's dignity or self-esteem—it was set down in the bill, as it were, with many other unpaid items ; and no item was to be overlooked.

'You have been,' said Madame slowly, 'we will say, imprudent. We will say you have been ignorant, in meeting this person unknown to me, both in Paris and here.'

'I was imprudent not to tell you,' said Harrie, thinking of Geneviève, 'I confess it.' Madame stared at her a minute.

'That,' she said, 'is not what I mean. In what concerns myself, I ask nothing. Even had I dreamed of asking to direct one of your crazy nation, since I paid you a salary for the direction of others, you have strictly been out of my charge. At most,' said Madame, with the pathos again, 'I could pray you, I could intreat you as a directress of youth, not to suggest ideas to the innocent girls among whom I have encouraged you to live.'

Geneviève again, obviously : she was the innocent girl. Harrie, gazing out of the window, felt her lips twitch at the idea of her suggesting anything to Geneviève.

'As to your story of the hôtel and the missing of the train, you offer it to me, mademoiselle, and so I must take your word. The explanation'—she gazed stonily at the hôtel card—'is quite complete. But is my disappointment in you less for that ?'

‘I am sure it is not,’ Harriet longed to say, in sheer sympathy. It was so necessary, clearly, to be disappointed in her, since Madame abandoned the other charge; particularly as she had made clear before she abandoned it, that she gave full credit to every word of it, both implied and suppressed.

‘I requested you,’ said Madame, with a nice air of coming to business after a harmless diversion, ‘to take charge of things here since we were out. That you disregarded—or forgot. Are we to say forgot? I know you are absent-minded.’

Harrie had forgotten one commission among a mass of little errands given her, the previous Monday in the town. As the commission was for Madame’s hairdresser, and happened to be urgent and delicate, it had not been forgiven her, and was clearly to be added to the list.

‘I did not forget,’ said Harrie. ‘I was tempted by an entertainment offered me, and I knew Geneviève was here.’

‘Geneviève?’ cried Madame, shocked. ‘I ask you, do I ever leave *her* in charge?’

To do Madame justice as a mother and guardian, she never did. ‘Geneviève can do nothing with the children, as of course you know. They would not go to bed, and made her cry with their “sottises,” and she has a headache, poor child, this morning. As for Léontine and Pierrette and the little Gogoffs, they were not asleep when I came in at half-past twelve; I was stunned to find them dancing; and as your room between was found to be unoccupied’—an awful pause—‘I was driven myself to inhabit it all night.’

Harrie's heart sank only a little lower at this information. She had reason to be thankful that Brian's letters were safely locked in her trunk—Brian who had enquired regularly after the health of 'the Barrière.' She had no doubt that Madame had enjoyed herself over her bottles, books, and toilet equipment, or that she had ferreted out her savings-bank book, and constructed discreditable theories on her little balance.

'A letter,' said Madame, pressing the forefingers of her fat hands together, 'has arrived last night for you from Madeleine de Bois-Sévérac, and awaits you in your room. Its contents I can divine. It is no doubt to inform you that you have succeeded.'

'Succeeded?' The girl's brows knit, as she stood pulling at her glove. Madeleine, the last of her collectable group, was she also arising in the hostile ranks to ban her?

'This morning,' said Madame, 'I have a letter from Madame de Sévérac, which informs me that Madeleine is to go at once—at once—to school in England'—Madame bent to a small sheet of paper on the table and read aloud—'“swayed somewhat also in the matter, dear Madame, by your known opinion, and that of the amiable Miss who has lately taught her.”'

'It was when she was unhappy about her examination,' said Harriet, with an effort. 'Her accent is very bad. I did say once, what is true, that she would pick it up quicker in England.'

'And you our English teacher,' said Madame, sharp and dry. She dropped the forefingers of her

joined hands, and united, all unconscious, the next pair. 'I interviewed the successor of Fräulein Lindt in Paris yesterday. You are probably aware that Fräulein Lindt is leaving us to-morrow?'

'I know it.' The girl's voice thrilled.

'Ah, yes, Geneviève has told me that you disapprove. It was possibly you that prompted Fräulein to claim her salary? The proceeding was ill-advised.' As though doubtful whether or no to put up another finger, she played a silent tune on the remaining three; when she stopped, the ring-fingers were stationary, tip to tip. 'As I was saying, Fräulein Lindt's successor—who is a German from Germany—has passed some three years in your country, mademoiselle, and has the language, in consequence, like a native. It has been a little—a leetle prejudicial to own, as I must ever in frankness do, that our resident maîtresse, though of English blood, was born in America.'

'I'd not ask you to insist upon the English blood,' said the daughter of Clench, in her dry, dainty tone.

'How?' ejaculated Madame: and then held up a fat hand. 'No, do not tell me; I do not want to know. You are excited, Miss, and we know in this mood you say "sottises" before you are aware.'

'I am ready to go,' said Harrie, tilting back her white-winged head; for the hat still crowned her, and, with the rings of hair beneath it, had been annoying Madame at intervals. The girl's whole light presence was attractive, terribly attractive, in the crisp, complete manner that the French must own. Miss Clench was not '*séduisante*'—the thing Geneviève strove wildly to be—seductive was not

at all in her genre: she was 'provoquante,' a challenge. Only the bold would ask for a shot at such a mark, but they would compete for it, laughing. Madame felt all this in her experienced soul, and being of her nation, appraised the object before her justly while she condemned. 'I am ready,' said Harriet, 'to go.'

Madame's plump hand was lifted anew, deprecating such brusque methods.

'You had arranged, I think, to stay till Easter. I am still responsible, and shall not act hastily. I was engaged yesterday on a letter to that Mrs. Champion—Champion, is it?'

'It is written so,' said Harrie.

'I never studied English,' returned Madame, who was not a fool. 'I have been, this morning, with some trouble — some delicacy — rearranging my phrases.'

'Oh,' said Harrie, flushing high, 'do you not think, Madame, that you could have let them stand?'

'Do not mistake me. The first letter, in a professional life, has a special value and significance, a value beyond all others. I am to launch you, Miss.' She gesticulated. 'I am responsible: and for your sake and this lady's, I must consider profoundly any statement to which I put my name.'

'Mrs. Champion is English,' said Harrie, her voice shaking. 'Might you not let her judge?'

'Exactly, I shall let her judge. Truth,' said Madame, with real fervour, 'is the thing for which I strive; and thus for an hour past I rearrange the phrases and strike out words.' She looked complacently at her writing-block, which was covered

with fine-pointed penmanship, in the bluest of ink. There was a pause.

‘She will not be home till the spring,’ said Harrie.

‘She passes through Paris in April,’ said Madame, in measured tones. ‘She is disappointed to find you a Catholic. She is sorry you do not sing.’ She stopped to observe the victim. ‘To be of that faith in your country is of course unusual,’ she said.

‘It has been useful,’ said Harriet, ‘here.’

‘Useful?’ queried Madame, who had employed her constantly to take the girls to church, especially at the early hour. ‘I have wondered sometimes, Miss, if you were serious about your religion.’ Her eyes ran up the graceful figure, and rested on the hat.

‘Would not Mrs. Champion prefer me if I were not?’ said Harrie. Madame stared for a minute.

‘On the contrary, she seems a most serious lady,’ she said, ‘and devoted to her children. The eldest son is at Oxford,—and would not, I gather, be in your charge. Did you speak, Miss?’

‘No,’ said Harrie wearily.

‘The second is also at a public school—near Wind—sor. The three youngest, two girls and a boy, are at home. They would be the affair of the governess, you or another as the case may be.’

‘There is another, then,’ said Harrie, dropping a hand at last to the back of a chair. She had stood very long on her feet, and Madame had not signed her to be seated. ‘The other is a Churchwoman, I suppose, and she sings, hein?’ Impatience overcame her at the Barrière methods.

‘Without doubt,’ said Madame. It was well for the young person before her to think less of herself ;

also, in view of the letter she had prepared for Mrs. Champion, and its possible result, this alternative candidate, whose existence had been hinted, would shield her own proceeding. Miss Clench had been counting a little too gaily on this post, to which the salary attached was absurd, twice as much as anyone in Madame's household had ever earned. 'With three young children,' said Madame, 'she is right to be careful. I should be careful myself.'

'I am good with children,' said Harrie.

'I said so, in my earlier letter.'

'And the present letter——'

'Contains information on some further points for which she asked.'

Harriet advanced a step. 'You will show me the letter, I suppose,' she said, with an edge on her sad little tone.

'But certainly not,' said Madame, folding it with quivering hands. 'Be satisfied that I have done my best, for you and for her.'

The girl looked at her a minute, and the trouble and vagueness in her grey-blue eyes would have disturbed a better woman. Three years make a vast difference to the manner of judging a growing girl. If Madame Barrière had known her defaulting maîtresse to be seventeen, instead of twenty as she reckoned, the childishness of that expression might have moved her to more mercy. But now, the quietness of lassitude seemed to her indifference, or that insolence of the foreigner, the thing she could never understand. Whether guilty or no, the girl's behaviour was outlandish, and her youth and charm were unfortunately against her.

‘ I have done my best,’ repeated Madame.

My father’s friend, Mrs. Escreet, will have spoken for me,’ said Harrie to herself, her young brows knit with that old habit of strain.

Madame thought, ‘ I wish you joy of your father’s friend ’ ; for she was a fundamentally uneducated woman, and her thoughts moved in the kitchen, as it were, while her voice spoke in the reception-rooms. Her pen, more exquisite still, wrote things she could never aspire to say : thus the nearer one approached to Madame, the greater was the disadvantage.

‘ You are fatigued a trifle,’ said Madame, putting her various papers together with growing contentment, for she was relieved that the girl had not obliged her to lose her temper. ‘ I advise you to retire, and gather your thoughts a little. A trifle of *recueillement* is what you need, after a *soirée* of pleasure. When I hear from the lady any definite news, I will inform you of it. *En revanche*, when you have anything to say to me, I will give you an opportunity. One has many opportunities,’ said Madame, patting the papers into piles, ‘ short of Confession, which should be for the graver sins. I cannot forget, you see, that you were once my pupil. Consequently, should you want advice, should you have misgiving, should the confession you make in Church move you to further confidence—I am always there, awaiting you. Remember that, my child.’

‘ I remember it,’ said little Miss Clench. ‘ I thank you.’ And she turned, dazed, to the stairway.

The fact was, as Geneviève had already discovered, Madame Barrière was madly curious.

X

FRÄULEIN LINDT sat at the piano, for a parting revel. Her communing with the keys was, to her own imagination, strictly private ; but the noise she made shook the house, at intervals, from top to bottom. Bertha had descended to the school-room simply to collect her music, which slid into the interstices of her green tin trunk ; but in turning over the well-worn sheets her purpose was diverted, and instead of packing it, she sat and played. After all, were not limited hours of practice over, perhaps for ever, and was she not free as air ? It was a great thought, and inspired her. She played despair, and she played defiance, and she played derision ; then she played long-drawn, languishing regrets ; then the furniture ceased rattling, and she leant a powerful elbow on the piano, and remained for five minutes in black brooding and depression. Presently a left hand crawled irresponsibly upon the keys, and suggested a new motive. Life returned slowly to the rigid statue, the right hand fell from her face, and she dashed into playing again. This sequence of events occurred frequently, so often, that the other occupants of the room had plentiful time for conversation in the intervals of harmony.

‘ Look at her,’ giggled the small girls, who were

engaged in finishing their little gifts for the New Year in the corner of the schoolroom by the window. Fräulein Lindt was, to these young observers, a perpetual harlequinade ; whether she pounded the piano in a didactic passage, or caressed it yearningly with a tilted head, or whether she merely sat majestic as now, her broad back vibrating to a succession of powerful chords, she was to Léontine and Pierrette, and the little Gogoffs, inexpressibly funny. Yet nothing, in all her dramatic changes, equalled the recurrent, pensive pause in its humorous effect.

‘ Look at her now, *do* look,’ Léontine gasped, as Bertha’s head subsided.

‘ Fräulein Lindt is in love,’ murmured a Gogoff in a lilting tone (the Gogoffs were imps).

‘ Fräulein Lindt is in love,’ said the other aloud. ‘ Do you hear that, Mademoiselle ? ’

‘ Chut, child,’ said Geneviève, who was by way of taking charge of the group, and directing their needles when necessary.

‘ Mademoiselle is laughing,’ whispered an imp. ‘ Say, Pierrette, shall I go to the piano, and ask her who it is ? ’

‘ Thou wilt not dare,’ said Pierrette, for whom embroidery had temporarily relaxed its charms.

‘ I dare and I go,’ said the Gogoff. ‘ Fräulein Bertha, say, Fräulein—who is it you are in love with ? ’

Fräulein Lindt turned her head, and the tears were in her pale blue eyes. She had been, for five minutes, most unhappy, as her looks betrayed ; but she loved childhood—that is, in the abstract—

and she smiled as well. 'One day thou wilt love also, my little one,' she said, 'something larger than thyself.'

'He's larger than herself,' confided the Gogoff, rushing back, amid an ecstatic flood of giggles. But all giggling, not to mention further pranks, were shortly drowned, for Fräulein Lindt, again proudly playing, began to sing as well.

'Er, der herrlichste von Allen,' she sang, in an untrained, powerful, not unpleasing voice. The child's question had brought her thoughts round to Miss Clench, the angel-natured girl, on whose cause she had spent so much misplaced enthusiasm in her conversation with Madame Barrière. Love was the theme of Bertha's song and of her thoughts : it thrilled in her voice and illumined her ugly face. Love for him—for him—that graceful youth with the blue eyes and generous heart, who had shared his pleasure, and his opera-programme, and his inmost thoughts with her—for half an hour. 'Holde Lippen, klares Auge, heller Sinn und fester Muth': transparent of spirit and bright of eye, was he not all that indeed? And faithful—faithful—was he not? What youth had ever crossed her gaze more like the young hero of Teutonic legend, a Walther, a Siegfried, a Parsifal—only not a Tristan, for such as Monsieur Pat could love but once. She had destined him; she, Bertha Lindt, and her most beloved Miss was to be happy. What matter schools, or salaries, or even separation? Sooner or later, in the last act of all, he 'der herrlichste,' the noblest, would step to her side.

'Tenez, voilà Miss,' said the wickedest little

Gogoff, whom Harrie chid most frequently in the bedroom, and who loved her in consequence. 'Miss—approach—listen: Fräulein Lindt is in love.'

Owing to the noise of the song, the little Gogoff spoke loud. Her accent also was sharp and clear, but she would not have been heard had not Bertha, according to a not infrequent habit, broken off suddenly and short.

As it was, the words stood out on silence: Bertha, catching the girl's eyes across the room, blushed crimson all over her face and neck—and Harrie knew that it was true. She felt a little frightened in the realisation, a little pitiful; but she could scarce spare pity for Bertha now.

'That satchet will not be finished for the New Year, Sonia,' she said to the Gogoff at random; and then turned to Geneviève, while Bertha Lindt began to play furtively again.

'Geneviève,' she said, 'is this true that Madeleine is returning?'

'She returns to-morrow,' said Mlle Barrière, looking her up and down while she spoke, as is the manner of some people to express the critical attitude. 'Merely for a few hours, of course, to collect her things. Madame her Maman awaits her in Paris, where they will remain over the fête. About their subsequent plans—you know best.'

'I know nothing,' said Harriet. 'I wish to see Madeleine, to ask her a question, and I have much to do. Do you know the train by which she arrives?'

‘The three-twenty,’ said Geneviève. ‘But I,’ she added, ‘am going to meet her. Maman has arranged with her mother that I should.’

‘Good,’ said Harriet absently. Bertha was playing divinely, and the music made her feel that somehow—somewhere—there must be sense in things. She wore a little black apron, in the neat French fashion, and she stood twisting her fingers in it for a moment. ‘Will you ask Madeleine, Geneviève, to come up to my room for an instant, when she arrives? There is your English lesson at six: I am really afraid of missing her.’

Geneviève nodded, still reviewing her with wide-open eyes in her inexpressibly insolent fashion. Her game of rivalry with Miss Clench on the subject of Madeleine de Sévérac was drawing to its close; but the last trick should be hers. The charming spoiled girl, the reigning princess of the provincial school, was to be torn from the Barrière clutches—as they suspected—by Harrie’s fault. Well, Harrie at least should not gain by the ruse. So thought Geneviève, her ears distracted also by the flood of music pouring steadily from a further corner of the room.

Harrie stood a short while longer, twisting her little apron and gazing from the window on the court. The little Gogoff, pulling at her wrist, was chattering to her, and she answered absently. Bertha was playing ‘Rheingold,’ coaxing a whole orchestra out of the worn piano, and—the poor, simple thing—loving Pat. Bertha was happy and glorious, though she was to pass the next night in a gloomy little Paris hôtel, with no prospects and

a green tin trunk for all possession—and that night the eve of the great fête, her own Sylvesterabend. Bertha had the secret, the noble gift of joy, the tears that are tears indeed. She loved without shame or fear, she hated without remorse, she laughed as little Sonia laughed, and she gave without stint, of necessity, throwing all she had into those piano-tones, that others might hear what she heard and be consoled. She was collectable, Bertha : most collectable. . . .

Personally, Harriet was not sufficient unto herself, much less could she afford at this moment to fling encouragement to others. She wanted help—not such advice as Madame offered, but something much more direct and bracing. She could not remain in this place for many days longer, it was evident : the only thing in all her situation that was clear. As for advisers, there was the priest, a kind old man but somewhat conventional ; there was Madeleine, capable enough and powerful to aid, if she would but bend her wilful thoughts. There was also the headmistress of the great State school, who had been most courteous and understanding, on one occasion when the girl had been driven to appeal to her. But that lady was Madame's hated rival ; to go to her was to burn her ships, to lose her last chance of credit with the Barrières ; and credit, even that of the Barrières, might be useful before long.

Harriet turned and went slowly to her room. She took a sheet of paper from her 'buvard,' and having lifted her eyebrows at it for a period began to write.

‘DEAR MR. HORN,’ the letter began,

‘I have lost my situation, and shall not remain at Versailles. I told you I had been foolish in going at all to the music with Patrick, and that was how it proved——’

She got so far, and then stared at it again, with a hovering pen. Pat’s note was already written—most easy it had been to write. Pat would be vastly annoyed by it, doubtless, but not anxious, and certainly—knowing the family as he did—not surprised. He would just wait, consoling himself with imagery and art, until the next change of Fate’s kaleidoscope threw them into each other’s arms.

But Mr. Horn was different. He was one of the people like Harriet’s self, born to responsibility, careful and concerned. He had taken her very seriously in the theatre that night, she was sure of it. He had even called her romantic, which showed not disdain exactly, but a slight sense of authority, or tutelage. It was ridiculous, but Miss Clench had a sense of something owing to him, as if he really had been her ‘correspondante’ all these years. She could not go to see him, if for no other reason, because Pat was in the house. It was impossible to imagine herself haunting that pair of men, fawning on them, in her desolate condition. She had to cut herself neatly off, to shroud herself sedately: and so these letters must not be sent off until just before she made her move. In any case they must wait, for she had to withdraw her bank-balance before she could finally fasten Patrick’s envelope; so Mr. Horn’s also might just as well be left unfinished.

Then the strain of her mind quite suddenly snapped, as between the lights it had a way of doing ; and she left her planning and pondering altogether, and curling a foot under her in the chair—a childish habit—she dreamed, holding her shoe. Harrie could have arranged such a pretty world, with all these charming people, if things had been a little different from what they were. She was sure Patrick's Cupid was lovely, for instance, though she had given herself no leisure to see it. How amusing it would be to make a little money, and under an assumed name, to buy Cupid and keep him in the family. For he was a Clench Cupid, not a doubt of that, and it was a question if any alien critic would even see the joke. Cupid was a great joke doubtless, under all his beauty, since Pat Morough had made him.

There was Madeleine too. Suppose Madeleine's mother should desire a girl to accompany her to England, and introduce her a little to English ways. Harrie had done her duty by Madeleine strenuously. She had corrected the same mistake twenty times in a conversation ; and she had read Brian's favourite Swinburne and Morris to her, to help her to the rhythmic ideal in English verse, an ideal as to which Madeleine was completely and pathetically at sea. Madeleine would be an enchanting companion upon an English tour, delightful to watch and to dispute with ; and her family was unusually lavish, and prompt in payment. . . .

Then there was Brian, her beloved. Suppose there was a letter from Brian, at this moment on

its way, timed to fall upon the New Year, and bring her all her heart again, and the promise of his coming. Even if he had married the New York girl—and Brian's campaigns could never be supposed to fail—Harrie could bear a stepmother, for the sake of his company. She just wanted him 'around,' as her old companions used to say. She wanted to see his teasing smile, and feel his big hand. She would not be jealous, just because another girl who was married to him liked it too. Oh, yes, she did want Brian sorely. . . .

Her head was low on her arms upon the table, when there was a frightened knock at the door, and little Sonia Gogoff hurried in to say that Fräulein Lindt was crying dreadfully in the little cloakroom, and they did not know what to do.

Geneviève received sufficient encouragement from Madeleine at the station to set her up in her own esteem, and give impetus to her projected confidences.

Formalities had to be got through first—regrets, laments, excuses: a passage in which each girl acted her part perfectly, and neither betrayed in eye or voice that she saw right through the other's attitude, and was disguising her own. Geneviève was furious with Madeleine for throwing over the household of Barrière; Madeleine was radiant at quitting Versailles and her dear companions to travel as a grown young lady; but these natural emotions were turned to suit the occasion, trimmed into neat phrases, and nicely adjusted into a short scene which did credit to both.

They took a long way home, though Mlle Barrière had promised her Mamma to return direct. There were urgent reasons for disobeying. Geneviève had a most fascinating store of gossip, and Madeleine had brought some sweets from Paris in a pink paper packet. Further, it could be argued that the straight way home was by little streets, where no girl so smart as Madeleine could walk in safety. Thus, since in Versailles all big roads lead to the castle, it was natural to go up one great avenue and down another, with a look into the pleasure-grounds, and a pause by Neptune's basin, on the way.

It was close to the latter fountain that Mlle Barrière's most thrilling confidences took place ; and for a period the superior Madeleine seemed really impressed.

' And what of *him* ? ' she demanded. ' Have you seen him ? '

' No one has seen him, ma chère. But she has had him, heaven knows how long.'

' And you mean she never told a soul ? It cannot be as you think.'

' Oh, it is a case, you may be sure of that.' Geneviève shook her head. ' As for me, I have seen signs of it for a long time past.'

' Pouf ! ' said Madeleine, who in her heart despised Geneviève. She fanned herself with a large fallen leaf, looking extremely dainty, disdainful, and abstracted. Madeleine possessed one of the passive natures, which accept rather than offer devotion. As for indiscretion, she spurred it by the cool front she presented.

'They have been meeting constantly,' said Geneviève.

'You are lying, dearest,' said Madeleine after consideration and more fanning. 'She cannot have done that, or I must have known. I have known our Harriet, remember, considerably well.'

Geneviève was aware of it, and raged.

'She has even boasted, when the girls were discussing theirs, that she had none—no passion, I mean. She talks of her father like a lover, but that is all.'

'The English are secretive,' said Geneviève curtly. She thought Madeleine an annoying cat, but she took a sweet out of her pink bag.

Madeleine demurred again. 'Only about their digestions, and cosmetics, and so forth. I know the English well, we have some in my family. Besides, to be secretive one must have a secret. And for this little Harriet, she is a child in heart.' Madeleine paused over a sweet, rejected it, and flung it into the wide pond, across which a pair of swans skimmed hastily to arrest the morsel before it sank. Then she chose another, and proceeded.

'She pleases me, nevertheless. She has "du chic" more than the others.'

'The others' included Mlle Barrière, to whom she spoke; the princess Madeleine was really rather cruel.

'She has written to you, has she not?' said Geneviève. This told, for the princess's delicate brows contracted.

'She has, and I answered by return. A line or

two merely, for on Tuesday I was dancing.' There was a pause before Geneviève tried again.

'I left her consoling Fräulein Lindt, who was weeping into the piano.'

'The dirty creature,' said Madeleine smoothly. 'Fortunately, I shall not have to play my scales to-morrow. I never could bear to touch the instrument after she had been near it.'

'I think nothing of her playing,' insinuated Geneviève. 'Her style is so bad, I was saying yesterday to Maman. She has no taste.'

The implied compliment failed on Mlle de Bois-Sévérac, who had taste not only in music, but in flattery.

'Her style and taste are beyond question,' she said drily. 'It is only that she looks like a sow while she is doing it.'

Geneviève sat silent sulking, and Madeleine's little hand tapped the marble seat. She looked up the Park and down, as if it all belonged to her. She fanned herself as if the leaf she held was of Watteau-painted silk. She threw a sweet to a swan with an air of careless ownership. The type of her face, more formed than that of most school-girls, suited the surroundings well enough. It was the drawing-master who had first discovered Madeleine's likeness to Marie Antoinette. She had the high-bridged nose and drooping eyelids, the curl of the lip, even the spring of hair, which seemed only waiting the moment to be powdered. To-day she had her best clothes on too, and the Paris coiffeur, with a feeling for style equal to that of the drawing-master, had arranged a little curl to

either side of her neck. With the long black ostrich feather, the envy of all her schoolmates, drooping over them, she might have stood to represent the old regime, and Geneviève the baffled democratic rage of the early eighteenth century.

After a time—‘He is handsome, did you say?’ she queried lightly.

‘A dream,’ said Mlle Barrière. ‘Like Captain d’Argent, but lighter on his feet. Quite young, dark, and with heavenly blue eyes.’

‘You are inventing,’ said Marie Antoinette, with a look of earnest interest. ‘How can you know?’

‘Ah,’ said Geneviève with a private nod. ‘He is an artist, as one would expect.’

There was a pause, Madeleine’s eyes still drooping, and her head turned aside.

‘I do not follow, dearest,’ she said. ‘He has not been here?’

‘No, indeed. I got it out of her. She dribbles information, especially after playing, if you get her the right way.’ Another pause. ‘I mean the Lindt, of course. Mon Dieu, she is a fool.’

‘You mean the creature *saw* him?’ said Madeleine, gripping the seat.

‘My dear, she was *introduced*: thrown into his arms, while we were all groping! You forget,’ said Geneviève carelessly, ‘that Lindt is the bosom friend.’

‘This really is too much,’ said Madeleine to the swans with pathos.

‘Did she not mention him in her letter?’ said Geneviève innocently surprised.

'Not a word—not a word.' Vehement fanning proved a fine susceptibility.

'If he should arrive to visit her for the fête,' murmured Madeleine, 'I did not promise Maman to return to-night.'

'My love,' said Mlle Barrière, leaning forward as her courage rose, 'if our Miss has a rendezvous, she will not let you know it. Did she tell you of the former one?—ha, you see.' Geneviève did not press upon the fact that the former interview had occurred in Madeleine's absence.

Mlle de Bois-Sévérac rose, and took a stroll to calm her agitation, as it might be on the stage—and ignoring her companion on the seat completely. Soon she returned with her brows lifted, and a tiny handkerchief crushed in her hand.

'Finish the sweets, in the name of Heaven,' said she. Plainly Geneviève was not to witness her emotion. It was trying to Mlle Barrière's self-esteem and hungry curiosity; however, she had made an impression, and she could not leave the sweets to waste. She shook them carefully out and filled her mouth.

'Dispose of the bag,' said the princess absently. 'I detest filthy papers on the walks. Ah, dear heaven, I shall be sorry to leave all this.' She looked up the Trianon Avenue, and over the swelling arch of the winter trees, and round the imposing marble pond: and really the luckless queen herself could not have looked otherwise, when driven to quit the haunts that had been hers. Madeleine, at times, gave Geneviève the same feeling of sulky helplessness that Bertha Lindt's inspired playing

had done the day before. She was terribly complete, as a personality.

On the homeward way, the princess was absently polite, and even more formal than at starting. She concealed a secret wound beneath an air of finest breeding. Neither this girl, nor any mortal that looked upon her—said Madeleine's manner—should know what she was suffering. She had used the daughter of her late preceptress just to suck out the scandal, and now she let her go. Geneviève, on reaching the house, had to admit that she had gained, by the march so stolen upon the English-woman—absolutely nothing.

XI

IMMEDIATELY after her musical revel—even in the act of sliding the sheets into the green tin trunk—Fräulein Lindt's spirits sank like lead. She was heavily miserable all that evening, and Harrie could do nothing with her. She tried to comfort and encourage, quite in vain ; she appealed to her pride, for, tear-draggled and uncombed as she was, she was the mockery of the house ; but Fräulein Lindt had no dignity, none at all ; she disdained all such false supports, and with the aid of several wet handkerchiefs she courted woe. She only showed, when driven to extremes by her younger tormentors, a furious temper which frightened Harrie, even while she strove to calm it. Finally, she sulked, and Harrie might have left her ; only she was secretly afraid, and could not risk driving Bertha to a belief that she was abandoned.

On the Friday afternoon of Madeleine's visit, she took Fräulein Lindt to the station, certain that in the majesty of her grief the green tin box would be forgotten. Bertha had everything at parting, she ascertained : her ticket and that of the box, the address of her hôtel, and that of the most promising of the situations vacant which she and Harrie had discovered. Miss Clench tried to be cheerful and

bracing, and even said of this post, with a smile, that she wished she had anything so good in prospect herself. Then she waved a little hand to Bertha in the train, and with the faintest shrug under her scanty furs, went home.

‘At last I see you,’ said Madeleine drily.

The little princess was waiting in Harrie’s room, with nothing to look at but a fat letter, addressed and lying open on the table. Nothing would have induced Madeleine to look at that letter, though she was absolutely thrilling with curiosity, and could see the name perfectly well, and though no one else on the premises would have scrupled, or refrained. She merely speculated about it, with delicate raised brows, gathering her ermine collar more tightly about her neck, for Harrie’s room was cold. She knew well on what errand her former friend was gone, for Geneviève had taken pains to inform her. Matters were becoming very serious indeed, and Madeleine began to think that a coup d’état was necessary.

Then Miss Clench came in. The two girls kissed almost in silence ; and Harrie put her walking things away, and patted her hair into order, with adroit little movements that were perfectly mechanical. Singularly, from the moment she appeared, Madeleine’s coup-d’état seemed further off. Queer as the Irish girl was to her ideas, her elegance was as indubitable as her charm. The princess, for all her languid aspect, carried a little inner standard of things as they should be, keen as a stiletto, against the touch of which few of her acquaintance could stand without shrinking. Harriet, when all criticism

was done, was as she should be in these essentials of life, at least in Madeleine's opinion.

So the pretty little doll sat watching, taking to pieces every movement, every garment the other removed, setting it down against her when she noticed a frayed collar, and in her favour when the shaft of a winter sunbeam crept in to gild her hair, exercising in short the whole armoury of instinctive criticism which her race have given them at birth, and which seldom rusts for lack of use. No individual in the world equals the French maiden of sixteen to twenty in this peculiar art ; and few maidens in France were more fastidious than Madeleine.

It was only when, having finished all her arrangements, Miss Clench sat down at the table and burst into tears, that all Madeleine's fine standards were upset at a single sweep, and she turned into an ordinary susceptible, simple-hearted schoolgirl.

'Dearest, hush,' she said, getting her arms well round Harrie, and crushing the long feather and little curls upon her shoulder. 'Do you think I do not know what you have suffered, left at the mercy of these people ? They have worked you to death, hein ?—when you should have been resting. They have misunderstood you, teased you, bullied you—hein ? And ugly looks—insinuations—bah, but I know it myself.'

There followed a pause of delicate ministration, with the eau-de-Cologne flask and cool little fingers ; it was sweet to Harrie to be so cared for, during the first few helpless minutes, and to receive this sisterly consolation from the idol of the school.

‘ Really, Madeleine, I am all right,’ she said, when she could speak steadily. ‘ Oh, dear, wouldn’t you say I had nerves ! ’

‘ Of course you have nerves,’ said the princess : they were excellent things, she implied, to have.

‘ But I can’t,’ cried Harrie, ‘ I can’t afford them. Oh ’—she wiped her eyes—‘ I suppose it’s these last days—and then that poor thing—this afternoon——’

Madeleine’s hand lifted pathetically ; it begged to hear nothing of Fräulein Lindt, whose case had been closed and finished in her letter ; the distasteful German was shut off, by fortunate fate, from their communion.

‘ Do you think I believed that coarse girl’s story ? ’ she said.

‘ Geneviève ? She’s been discussing me ? Bon Dieu, she’s a parrot : she only takes her mother’s opinion.’ Harrie leant her head upon her hands, and the old line showed upon her brow. ‘ I did stay out all night, so I suppose they are right to suspect me.’

‘ They have greasy minds,’ said Madeleine, with her smooth decision of utterance : and she shook off the Barrières also. ‘ But say, chérie, what a misfortune. How can it have occurred ? ’

‘ Well,’ said Harrie, with a Clench twinkle, ‘ you should just have seen the trams. They ran away like wild things, under my eyes. Out of two trains and a tram, Madeleine, I could not catch one flying.’

Madeleine remained earnest, for she had no humour : and what was rarer, little conscious social pretence. ‘ And you were actually alone ? ’

she cried. 'Heavens, how alarmed I should have been.'

'I was not alone the last time, no,' said Harrie. 'My cousin was with me. You never mean, Madeleine, Geneviève has left out that?'

The princess looked the least trifle out of countenance. 'But surely that would make it worse,' she murmured. 'Alone—with a man—I suppose Monsieur your cousin is a man?'

'He is,' said Harrie, 'and it made it worse. Luck was against me, and has been all the week.' They both looked at Pat's letter, and then at one another. The inmost confidence of a clever girl is not so easily given, and in her heart Madeleine liked Harriet for her reticence. To boast of a conquest was vulgar simply, and though she was facile enough in listening to her friends' histories, Madeleine was seldom guilty herself of flaunting the discoveries she had made on the threshold of life. She capped a tale of triumph languidly, of course, when the mere exigence of the game compelled her to compete. But she had a pride which, in conjunction with her prettiness, made her respected: as a girl is respected who knows more things than she will say.

'See,' said Madeleine, taking her decision and sitting down. 'I must go back to town to-night, for we have a midnight party at the Café de la Roche. My brother comes here to fetch me, as I have arranged, at eight o'clock. To-morrow, chérie, you must join us for the fête, and pass the night at the hôtel, if that porpoise below will let you stay. If not, I will direct Papa to bring you back and stop her odious mouth. It is all of the most complete

simplicity—and it would be charming if you would get your cousin to join us.’

‘Oh, dear,’ laughed Harrie, ‘and is that all? Here is a new way to manage the world.’ She gazed at Madeleine, though, and her heart warmed, as ever to things collectable. Here they were, in one way or another, sweeping all created things to their uses, and following their orbits with serenity. Yet—was it credible that Madeleine and Bertha should shine in the same heaven?

‘But I am profoundly serious.’ Madeleine raised her eyebrows. ‘Papa, Maman, René, were all distressed that I had found no companion, especially as René has a friend. But there, the cousins they proposed were too impossible! Fat, quarrelsome, jealous—mon Dieu! You will come, chérie, and wear that sweet blue dress.’

‘I cannot,’ said Harriet gravely.

‘But you can, since it is I that say it! Can you not trust me?’ said Madeleine. ‘Do you imagine, in making such a proposal, I have not all in view? Now listen: it is clear you cannot stop here till Easter, with this crew of people whispering and grimacing. Grant me that at least.’

‘I grant it,’ said Harrie, taking the fine little hand held out to her. ‘To tell the truth, I had arrived there quite alone. I have been enquiring to-day, and I have an address from Mlle Chavanne.’

‘And who is she?’ said Madeleine, bearing interruption patiently.

‘The English professor at the school down there.’

‘You went to the big school? Tiens—and Madame had not hydrophobia?’

‘ She has not heard of it yet, I hope.’

‘ Let her hear, and snap your fingers,’ advised Madeleine. ‘ When she has foamed a little, she will feel better. Well, I admire your spirit, dearest, and you have now cut the ground under you very completely, for she will certainly hear : but that is not the point. To the devil with addresses for the moment, since I have an idea.’

‘ Give me all the idea to hug it,’ said Miss Clench warmly, ‘ and then I will go to Geneviève’s English lesson.’

‘ Oh, dear me, how you distract one,’ said Marie Antoinette, a hand to her head. ‘ What can a lesson matter, on New Year’s Eve ? ’

‘ It only matters forty sous,’ said Miss Clench meekly. ‘ But that’s worth taking.’

‘ You are driving me frantic,’ said Madeleine. ‘ Mad.’ She rose and walked about a little. ‘ Now listen, before my brain turns at the idea of forty sous mattering at all to a person with hair like yours.’ Miss Clench laughed a little, but Madeleine saw no joke. ‘ Maman, who is desperate—simply desperate—at the idea of my leaving her, though I broke it to her as slowly as I could, has been crying for days. She has never got used to my being at school, and the idea of me being as far as London prostrates her. She is atterrée,’ said Madeleine, and put a curl straight. ‘ It was proposed first that a daughter of the family that receives me should be received chez nous in exchange. I welcomed this, thinking of her solitude in the château all the summer ; but it seems, even from the first Maman has had her doubts. Now it appears, the thought of the English girl

(whose portrait we have received) oppresses her so terribly that she would sooner pay my full board in England than have her in Touraine.' Madeleine turned about. 'I wish you would not look at the time, dear Harriet. I long for you to grasp our situation. I fear—I really fear you are thinking of Geneviève more than me.'

'I could never do that willingly,' said little Miss Clench. 'I've ten minutes yet of strained attention.' Marie Antoinette smiled at her and proceeded.

'It is evident I cannot let Maman have sleepless nights, merely owing to the portrait of a girl who squints. It is equally certain she must have cheerful companionship during my sojourn in your country. I have been,' said Madeleine, a hand to her brow, 'really exceedingly perplexed.'

'Do you wish for a suggestion?' said Harrie. She thought she had never seen anything so charming as the little princess, inspired by her impulsively beneficent campaign. Madeleine would have done an ugly thing prettily, but this was a beautiful thing. It warmed Harrie almost to remorse, for the girl had been by no means always so unselfish.

'You must understand the whole first,' said Madeleine, raising a hand. 'Papa is paying a great deal for my board at this place, owing to special provisions that they both have made, on heaven knows how many postcards. That, and the journeys, makes it impossible for Maman to pay a companion for herself as she would have desired.'

'Darling, wait a minute,' said Harrie. 'Does she desire a companion for herself at all, Madame your mother?'

'She?' said Madeleine, with a lift of the expressive brows. 'I desire it for her; I have pointed out its advantages; and that, at home, is enough.'

'The biggest obstacle isn't there at all, when the view is better without it.' This the collector by the table supplied, and wisely not aloud. 'Proceed,' she murmured, collapsing. Madeleine proceeded, to the crisis.

'The question is,' she said, 'if we could find a person unselfish enough to go. There is much to do there, for Maman is impassioned for Nature, and picks far too many flowers to go in the vases, and leaves them about the floor. As for Papa, he talks about nothing but hunting when he is at home, and René, of course, goes next March for his service. Most companions could not bear it, at least without a salary. It is only for my sake——'

'The ten minutes is complete,' said Harrie, 'and I think the idea is finished, is it not?'

'I cannot think of anything more for the moment,' said Madeleine, drawing daintily back from her embrace. She was a trifle shy of embracing, and had forgotten herself already quite enough. 'I will tell you if I do, later in the evening. There is dearest Maman to be consulted, of course; but I will do that, over her chocolate in the morning.'

'And you really expect me to ask leave of absence again for to-morrow?'

'I expect it, yes,' said Madeleine. 'What a sympathetic face your father has, dear Harriet: I must give you a new frame. Ah, ah! I have not told you about my étrennes; wait, it is too exquisite——'

‘ Later in the evening,’ laughed Harrie. ‘ I really cannot bear any more fairy-tales now.’

Does a fairy-tale, in life, ever reach its end ? That is one of the things Miss Clench pondered, as she sat late that night at her window, her head upon her hand. To be happy ever after is obviously too dreary a finish to a cheerful tale ; it is so vague that it almost leads you to mistrust the whole ; it is better—almost better—that ugly life should elbow in, interrupt the plot, and that those pretty dreams should remain fragments, never consummated. So it had been with the fairy-tale of the château in Touraine ; and so simply—a mere grain of schoolgirl jealousy had done it all. Fate pushing, Harriet had run up against the blank wall in Madeleine : and now remained half-dazed by the consequent shock, the glittering sherds of half an hour’s fancy tumbling round her.

It had been too fair, of course, too easy, that promise of wealth and sun and sweetness—and leisure above all—ahead, after this tangle of anxieties. She should have suspected it at once, and guarded herself against those childish hopes, and this more childish disappointment. But she had not guarded herself : Brian’s daughter so often forgot to guard till all precaution was too late.

Madame had heard of Harrie’s mission to the ‘ big school,’ and suspected her plot to quit her ; that was the first thing, which might in ordinary circumstances have mattered little. In a place of tattle like Versailles it was bound to happen, as

even Madeleine had forecast. Then, on the top of that, and Madame's baleful looks over the supper-table, the real bolt fell, which Fate had been preparing.

Madeleine was a little vexed in spirit because her brother René had not come, in accordance with her royal decree, to fetch her back to the expectant capital. She had collected her properties, paid the servants, given away her school-books, and taken a graceful leave of everybody, and now sat smiling, though her foot tapped gently. She was most eager, as a fact, to leave these schoolroom surroundings, this too-familiar atmosphere of ink-stains and uniforms, and plunge into life and the Café de la Roche. The hour was nearly eight o'clock by Madame's ugly little timepiece ; the minutes of the Old Year were running out fast ; even Versailles was one wide hum of busy gaiety, and in Paris all the world was in the streets, or swelling the festive gatherings in public places. The little princess at Madame's table expected and desired to be with them, and greet as it should be greeted the first New Year of her freedom, that means such worlds to a young girl. She talked ever more languidly, and her smile, though still sweet, grew absent.

Then the bell of the appartement rang.

'It is René,' said Madeleine. 'The tiresome traînard. Well, Harriet, we shall expect——'

But it was not René. It was a messenger : a messenger, as it seemed by muttered report, for Mademoiselle l'Anglaise.

Harrie rose, somewhat embarrassed by the looks all about her, and went out to the vestibule. Fate

awaited her there, in the form of an entirely strange man with a note.

‘What is it?’ said Madame, hovering dragon-like in her wake. Madame did not find it consistent with her duty of late to leave Miss Clench alone.

‘I hardly understand,’ said Harrie, frowning over the note under the gas. ‘It is Fräulein Lindt. She has been ill in the train, this lady says. . . . Oh, mon Dieu!’

She turned white enough to frighten Madame, and staggered back against the wall.

‘What is it, child?’ Madame snatched at the note, which was withheld. ‘Good gracious, what a time you are! What can it have to do with you?’

What, indeed, many might have asked, seeing the slip of a frightened girl on whom the blow fell.

‘She tried to poison herself,’ Harriet moaned, staring at the written paper. ‘This lady was at the station. Oh, poor thing, poor thing.’ Feeling vaguely in the void, she clutched the cloaks hanging on the wall to support her shaking limbs.

‘Dead?’ said Madame sepulchrally.

‘No—oh, no. They carried her to hospital—the address is given; and she has asked for me.’

‘Well, you cannot go,’ said Madame. ‘It is nothing of your business, or indeed of anyone’s here. Thank God, we have done with her.’ She did not speak loud, for the messenger still waited at the door; she had sidled on instinct into her little bureau.

‘You say it is nothing of your business?’ said Harrie, lifting her fair head. Her eyes shot sparks,

for, with all her trembling, the Clenches were a fighting race.

Madame burst into ugly language—the kitchen in her had the ascendancy. What was it to her, if her dismissed *maîtresse* ate poison, and had an indigestion in a train? She had borne enough horrors from the creature, while she was still about and under her eyes. Now she washed her hands of her; she might go to the devil in her own way, and as rapidly as she chose; it was evident she would not choose to waste time.

‘I think you hardly understand,’ said Harrie. ‘This lady—a sister of mercy, I think—is very kind, and writes to me herself. Bertha Lindt has used my name. She asks me to go, either to-night or to-morrow, since she promised Bertha.’

‘You will go neither to-day nor to-morrow,’ said Madame.

‘You cannot prevent me,’ said Harrie indignantly, ‘To-morrow is the holiday.’

‘Holiday or none, you will not go to Paris. I do not trust you,’ said Madame, ‘out of my sight.’

The Clench in Harrie would have made a stand and striven to go at once; but owing to the shock and Madame’s violence, she felt physically giddy and ill.

‘Come with me, then,’ she gasped, holding to the coats. ‘You owe her as much as will take you to Paris and back.’

‘Nor that either,’ said Madame. ‘Come in and sit down, child, in the name of reason. I have no wish for the whole place to hear, and you will be fainting next. I may go on my own account to

Paris, if I see fit. . . . of all moments in the year to be annoyed, good heavens ! Disreputable,' she muttered, turning her back. She put a foot on the fender a moment, swallowing as though to master her rage. Nerves, she would doubtless have named it ; but one had only to glance at the expression of her rather protuberant eyes in the glass above the hearth, to determine from what emotion she was suffering. She was angry with Harrie, and furious with Fräulein Lindt ; but the person she would have liked to tear limb from limb was the charitable meddler who had sent the message.

' She won't die now, I suppose,' she said, when she had sufficiently recovered from the tumult of her feelings. ' Here, let me see the letter.' This time she obtained it, and read it through suspiciously, as though uncertain still it were not a ruse. Behind Bertha hovered for Madame the shadow of Pat, the dangerous man whom Bertha had so evidently admired. She was quite capable of imagining the three were in league to deceive and defraud her, as Miss Clench would have perceived, if her wits had been as active as usual.

Having read, she went out and said something to the messenger. The door slammed.

' What is it ? What is it ? ' The greedy faces of schoolgirls filled the doorway, eager for excitement, peering to catch a glimpse of the rebel Miss Clench ; for most of the household had heard some travesty of her adventure. Madeleine alone stayed in the background, disgusted to be abandoned by her family, and too superior to betray curiosity as to the bourgeois Barrière sensations. These occurred as

she knew periodically, in the kitchen and bureau, and she had always coolly mocked at them.

‘It is nothing,’ said Madame, returning and elbowing through the ranks of her inquisitive pupils. ‘Miss Clench, that is all I wanted you for : I hope you are feeling better.’ Then nerves got the upper hand. ‘Go, do you hear, for goodness’ sake, and leave it to me. The business is unsuitable for a girl of your age to touch—it is vile mismanagement that you know anything of it. Let those who have experience judge for you, and in heaven’s name, let me have my room to myself. Get away, Sonia, from under my feet ; keep quiet out there, you girls, and take the little ones into the schoolroom. Geneviève—you may come to me.’

XII

‘RENÉ has not come,’ said Madeleine, ‘and perhaps the donkey is waiting at the station. He has lost the address—or he may be afraid of coming in, you never know with boys. In any case, I can wait no longer. I go.’

She spoke coldly, a little : for she had sat below for a long half-hour in the dismal dining-room. Geneviève remained closeted with her mother in the office, and Harriet, who presumably held the threads of these interesting secrets, had not called her to her room. This neglect failed to fall in with Madeleine’s idea of what was suitable, especially after her agreeable efforts in Miss Clench’s interest during the afternoon. One’s efforts merit some recognition, after all, however deserving the object of them : and now she had to make an excuse to intrude, which was a thing she never cared to do, and barely consistent with her dignity. She brought a cloak on her arm, as though merely slipping in to say good night.

‘You are better, dear, I hope,’ she added ; for Harriet sat at her window quite idly, and had barely moved at her entrance. On the table by her now there lay two letters, the former and a new one, recently opened.

‘I have not been ill,’ said Harriet. Then, as her

little friend approached doubtfully, she made a movement. Even her lips seemed stiff, but she forced herself to speak. 'I thought you had gone, Madeleine,' she said. 'But since you have come to me, you had better hear. Sit down a minute, while I get my thoughts.'

The princess sat, with exquisite condescension. Madeleine was not used to be ordered, nor addressed precisely in these tones.

'I cannot come to you to-morrow,' said Miss Clench quite bluntly.

'And why not?' said Madeleine, lifting her brows.

'Because Madame will not let me, so she says.'

'Oh, mon Dieu,' said Madeleine. 'How badly you must have managed, dear. You should have left it to me.'

'And if I did go,' said the Irish girl unheeding, 'it's not on parties and presents I could pass my time. Madeleine—listen: you were beautifully generous to me this evening.'

'Oh, nonsense, I was not,' said Madeleine, tapping her foot.

'Will you,' said Harrie, still unheeding as her purpose warmed, 'take up that generosity, as it might be a New Year's gift, and lay it all down in another cause?' Then, as the girl seemed puzzled, 'Will you do something for me?'

'Certainly, dearest,' said Madeleine. In the pause she added, 'Please do not be so nervous, Harriet. You cannot think how easily I catch agitation from others.'

'I am not,' said Harrie. 'It's only my heart is

cut in two.' She reached a letter from the table—Madeleine's pulses leapt as she did so. 'Read that,' she said, still with the brusquerie of deep excitement.

It was doubtless natural in Miss Clench, wishing to appeal to humanity, to offer a first-hand piece of evidence ; but it was rash in the present instance, for the letter was written by one of the persons, stranger to ornament, who take the poor and suffering as they are, and do not trifle with the language that describes them. Among other plain statements was one Harrie had perhaps forgotten : ' The poor creature, who is very sick, has confessed to me her intention, and mentioned you by name—— ' There were other brief details of police and what not—it was not a drawing-room tragedy.

' Disgusting,' said Madeleine, laying it aside with more fervour than her still voice often had. She rose, most bitterly disturbed, and walked about as though wishing to escape the picture.

' It is more than disgusting,' said Harrie, taking the letter she threw down. ' It is cruel.'

' And what hideous taste,' the princess proceeded, ' to send such a document to you. No wonder you half fainted.' She looked herself over in the mirror a moment and turned. ' Harriet—excuse me, I must go.'

' And my commission ? ' queried Harrie, her chin on a little fist, and fixing her with earnest eyes. ' Will you not go to see the poor thing, Madeleine ? She only wants a word.'

' No,' the girl said, shortly and drily.

' It's for me I ask you to do it. I cannot go my-

self if they choose to make a claim on me. Madame talks of going, but she will not. She's furious with Bertha, and will have no mercy on her or me. I have written—but what is writing? It's a face she knows that she wants, as we all want when we are in misery and shame.'

'You seem to know about it,' said Madeleine, quite at random. The lady of quality was vanishing rapidly in the schoolgirl, and not a very uncommon type at that. She was so vexed and helpless, that she found it hard not to cry: only it was not an occasion for crying, and Madeleine refused. She scratched instead, and spitefully.

'I know what shame is,' said Harrie, speaking low, 'though—Heaven shield me—not for myself. Madeleine, it's an awful feeling.'

'I shall not go,' said Madeleine. 'You have no right to ask me. Maman——'

'Ah, leave Maman,' cried Harrie. 'It's yourself I am asking—and have I no right to ask?' Then, as the princess remained, her pretty profile turned towards her, 'Very well, has *she* no right, Bertha Lindt? I have to say it, Madeleine.'

'With the kind intention to shame me?' Madeleine enquired. 'I wrote to you about that, surely. I thought we had finished that discussion.'

'You cannot finish with injustice,' said Harrie, rising and thrusting aside her chair. 'On my word, I think in this world you never do.'

'I am unjust, then; prejudiced. Well,' said Madeleine with a pretty shrug, 'I must bear it.'

'You do more than bear it,' said Harrie swiftly. 'You are proud—proud of your prejudices! But

this is not one to be proud of, if it makes you do an unkind thing.'

'I am not unkind,' said Madeleine, humping her fur wrap crossly on her shoulders. 'Really, you are unreasonable, Harriet. The woman's nothing to me, and she's a criminal, nearly. I will send a note to her—there: and Maman will send money, I dare say.'

'You do not think of her as she is,' cried Harrie, as though in eager warning. 'Think, Madeleine, for surely you should know. What do *they* want with money or messages? It is friends she wants—friends: it is people.'

'Well, I am not a person,' said Madeleine, with an unmirthful laugh. 'At least, not the person for her. Ah, juste ciel! who is that?'

The princess's nerves had suffered too. Her hand flew to her heart, and her fine brows were bent; yet it was only a knock at the door.

'Your brother, mademoiselle,' said the sulky voice of one of the disaffected servants of the house.

'Thank Heaven!' said Madeleine, very fervently. She gathered up her best manner again, for it had been much disturbed. 'René,' she called, 'are you there? Come along, for mercy's sake, and take this cloak. Well, Harriet,' she said at the door, for her brother was without, and formalities must be preserved, 'I am sorry we shall not see you to-morrow. It is a pity, but——' She shrugged.

Harrie did not say she was sorry, Madeleine noticed. She seemed to be thinking, as she stood with her hands behind her, under the single glaring

light of the tiny room. She was looking, oddly enough, very pretty, with her brilliant eyes, pathetically pale face, and gleaming hair disordered over a knitted brow. Yet she seemed more abstracted than ill-tempered, and she reached for her blotting-case, and scribbled a line on a sheet it contained.

‘It would be asking too much to beg you to post a letter at Montparnasse,’ she said, in her accurate foreign French. ‘The hospital’s in the station quarter, and it might reach quicker, posted there.’

‘Certainly,’ said Madeleine coldly. ‘Here, René.’

‘If Mademoiselle prefers, I will leave the letter,’ said the young student without, who had not spoken. ‘It is barely out of our way, and I can put my sister in a cab.’

‘Thank you,’ said Madeleine, with a vexed laugh. Knowing René, she perceived almost without looking that he admired Miss Clench. This happened, by an odd chance, to be the last straw to her sadly tried nerves. ‘I am sick of this place,’ she said clearly, moving out of the door with her head held high, ‘and delighted to be going. I hope I shall never see any face it holds again.’

‘Bon,’ said Monsieur René, and his laughing eye met Harrie’s. He was not, the look conveyed, of Madeleine’s opinion; but she had, as ever, to be admired and humoured in all she chose to do. He wrapped his little sister up with an air of ready service and protection that was pleasant and comforting to behold, and then, with a final jest, drew her away with him down the passage.

Harriet, left behind in a loneliness not much differing from her former abandonment on the

first day of the holidays, relieved herself as then : she soliloquised.

‘ You are not one of mine, Madeleine,’ she said, gazing after the charming little figure, and the last wave of the long plume. ‘ I was mistaken—I am afraid I cannot have you. I—I have struck you off.’

Then she cried—for her eyes loved Madeleine.

Harrie’s little chamber was very quiet that evening, for the children did not come to bed, and their cheerful chatter in the rooms adjoining hers was absent. The whole household was staying up, according to the tradition, to watch the New Year in ; and unaccustomed fruits and biscuits, and somewhat questionable champagne, were being circulated downstairs to celebrate the occasion, and relieve the tedium of waiting for the impatient children. Harrie herself did little but sit motionless in the solitude for which she was thankful, her head upon her hand.

She was only disturbed when there was a tiny knock at the door, and a little Gogoff slid in.

‘ Yes, dear ? ’ said Miss Clench mechanically. Sonia, in a cracker-cap, pulled on anyhow, and torn above the ear, was more imp-like in appearance than ever, though her black eyes were blinking under the light.

‘ It is only—I am getting very sleepy,’ whispered Sonia, snuggling up closely to Miss Clench’s side.

‘ Go to bed then, darling,’ said Harrie, smiling.

‘ But there are still seventy-six minutes on the clock, Pierrette says. It was to wish you the “ bonne année ”—and I wanted to be the first.’

‘ Well, you are the first,’ said Harrie, ‘ are you not ? ’

‘ It isn’t come yet,’ objected Sonia.

‘ Who knows it mightn’t be born bad,’ whispered Harriet, ‘ unless you wish it for me now.’

‘ I do wish it,’ said Sonia, relieved : ‘ and—and that is all.’ She got up from the arm of Harrie’s chair. ‘ Will you come and tell me stories,’ she insinuated, ‘ if I lie upon my bed ? Because I have got to keep awake for it, like Pierrette and the others.’

So Miss Clench—having taken the precaution first of undressing the little Gogoff—told her stories as long as it was necessary. She used the beautiful low tone that she had used to Bertha, which had already often proved its power with a sick or wakeful child. As for the matter of what she told, it dealt with unusual persons and most improbable events, and was entirely wanting in sense or order or consistency, or any of the qualities of a practical or practised narrator. As a matter of fact, the narrator’s mind was very absent all the time. When Sonia was quite asleep she kissed her, and went back to her room somewhat more satisfied. She felt curiously, in the vague state of her sensations this evening, that with Sonia she had finished something at least that needed to be completed.

Cheered in this unaccountable way, she cleared up various other little bits of business, and packed her small box almost full. The year was very old indeed, tottering almost, when she turned to the last matter that needed completing, and finished the letter to Mr. Horn. Extracting the sheet from its

hiding-place, she read it over as far as it had gone, and proceeded in a hurry.

‘I have lost my situation’—was how it finally read—‘and shall not remain at Versailles. I told you I had been foolish in going at all to the music with Patrick, and that was how it proved. It was not his fault at all, and he must not think it (not that he will). I think I shall be wandering for a while, here or perhaps in England, but you will not trouble about me, for you know I can care for myself. I am explaining that all to him, and also that I can be of no service to him for the time, which is why I shall be quiet. Perhaps you will say it’s easy to be quiet when you are at your wits’ end with a boy, as I was with Pat.

‘I do not believe, sir, that you will let him go far from you, and I feel through you that I hold him fast. Is that too much for his cousin to expect, that you will be the peg to fasten him? You are always there, you said to me twice in the theatre, and we can never keep a dwelling, we Clenches.’

Here her pen paused, and swallowing down something in her throat, she continued even more hastily :

‘We are the mad people, all of us ; so you will not be surprised if now and then I write you letters, wanting Brian—I mean when I have to send my feelings far from me. I have written them before now to him, when he left me no address, and sunk them in the castle ponds. The reason I choose you, though a silly one enough, you had better know. There was an article I read long ago, when Brian first left me. It was in an English magazine, and it

was called "In Praise of Peace." The name signing it has come back to me lately, and it was yourself. I was a little young girl at the time: and thinking I wanted the thing you wrote of, I collected Mr. Horn.'

That was what came to Geoffry, on the morning of the New Year. Quite early on the morrow of its writing, with the not unwilling aid of a disaffected servant, Miss Clench ran away from Versailles.

PART II
FAROVER

I

IT is Indian summer in an English garden : in a county of roses too (one can count the shires where they are natural to the soil), and blessed by the richest breath of early afternoon. Winifred Escreet, strolling through her little domain at Farover with the slow, untroubled gait of a queen in full possession, could even decide at leisure to forgive Rosaline for making her wait a full half-hour for singing. Her thoughts were weighty and grave as she strolled along the pergola-path, alternately lit and shadowed as the sun struck through the leaf-clad bars above her ; yet not a seam showed on the handsome, serious face under the plenteous weight of dark hair touched with grey. Having fixed Rosaline Maskery's weekly visit for three o'clock, prepared the music and ordered two kinds of sandwiches for the tea-tray at four, she had set aside the earlier hours for coming to a decision : or half a decision, for as yet her husband had not shared and sanctified it. She had thought it out carefully before luncheon, while she collected rose-leaves for pot-pourri ; and now, in this extra time on which she had not counted—for little Rosaline was seldom late—she was tidying her mind upon the point : cutting the frayed edge of her purpose smooth, as it were : removing wandering little rags

of doubt : preparing, with the easy, slow humour which was her gift, the method of its production and presentation to Gervase, when Rosaline should be gone : Gervase, whose mind was as her own, whose humour and taste it was no trouble to forecast, so trained they were by old companionship to meet and follow hers.

But for all the conning of this graceful campaign which occupied her more serious mind, Winifred was not above the consciousness by the way of a sublime sense of suitability ; of matching perfectly, in dress and demeanour, the spirit of her garden and the glamour of the autumn sun ; of ' composing well,' as the artist would say : for the happy land of the Escreets bordered that of art, and they loved, in a just measure, of course, to speak its language. They had made, like many well-matched, childless couples, by a process of careful filching from various dialects, a language of their own. They spoke a very little German when on the almost daily theme of music ; when dealing with the drama they spoke a very little French ; they skimmed the expressive slang of the neighbouring university when academic subjects were uppermost ; they had evolved a unique baby-language for the animals of the house, and (in the strictest privacy) had been known to apply it to one another. It was all done within the limits of taste and tact, those civilised arts which people like the Escreets study for us, raising the standard ever higher, that the wary unchosen may not catch it, try he never so hard. The study needs leisure, and leisure the Escreets certainly had ; though their days were well laid-out, and

they were to their own minds busy people. After all, busy-ness is simply a state of mind, as either of them would have been prepared to argue for hours. Mrs. Escreet was busy now, nipping off stray dead roses as she trimmed her thoughts ; and she continued busy up to the very moment of Rosaline's appearance, framed in the pergola archway.

Perfect—all but the skirt, the artist decided as she turned. Miss Maskery, though in bicycling attire, was a pretty, blooming girl, and the flush of haste and a little shyness made her prettier.

'Oh, *dear* Mrs. Escreet, I am sorry,' said Rosaline, in ringing tones. That was her one fault, she spoke a little too loud. It is a trait of health, and argued the good organ that Winifred knew she possessed ; but in private speech, as in private singing, tone should not be overdone. Winifred's own voice was quieter than usual in response, though friendly.

'My dear child—and the lesson ! It is half-past three.'

'I know, I know, and your time is so precious,' said Rosaline, who really thought so. 'But it is like this,' she went on, with a quick kiss to the hand laid on her shoulder. 'I have been detained first by Mr. Champion, and then by Auntie.'

'Ah,' thought Winifred, with another little pat to her morning's decision. 'Which Mr. Champion, Rosalie ?' she asked aloud.

'Mr. Tom.' The girl laughed, very frankly. 'You see, I was in Stackfield Lane, on my bicycle, and stuck all over with bills.'

'Bills ?'

‘Ann said, since I was coming out, I might as well do a little “work” for Mr. Champion. Ann’s working for the ward, you know. I said I wouldn’t canvass, but I did not mind leaflets, a few. Of course, Ann gave me a stack of them, and bills as well. Then, as luck would have it, Tom met me by the lodge-gate, and saw his father’s name staring out, and chose to be absurd and waste my time.’

Thus Rosaline explained, hanging on Mrs. Escreet’s arm. Winifred, never hasty, took time to consider, as they moved slowly along the path to the windows of the drawing-room. Tom Champion, an eldest son and the great match of the district, was her own second cousin; and she had been responsible herself, in a careless moment, for presenting him to Miss Maskery, a charming and clever girl. But the presentation had been effected more than a year since at a boatrace party, when Professor Maskery was still alive, and his daughters Rosaline and Ann in quite the forefront of Oxford society. The Maskery girls, never affluent, had been left almost poor; and friends, notably their aunt, the Vicar’s wife at Stackfield, had been for long making efforts to help the pair. Assistance was not hopeless in the case: for Ann, though plain, was a purposeful girl, only hampered by a taste for taking difficult and ill-paid posts, such as that she served at present for the women’s political society; and Rosaline was too pretty to give her family much concern. She would marry one of the many who were known to have been hovering about her in her father’s lifetime, and settle soon and well.

Still, the year of mourning flew by, and Rosaline did not settle, either into work or matrimony ; and Mrs. Grayling, the Vicar's wife, spoke of her with a wrinkled brow. Winifred, easily bored by Mrs. Grayling, was bored about her younger niece : until she heard Rosaline sing Schubert's ' Mignon ' in a black dress—and then she fell in love. She did so easily with any beautiful or pathetic object. The love did not always last, as her critical spirit got to work ; but in this case she preserved an affection for the girl when her first delight fell dead. Rosaline was bright, and cultured, and had a true soprano voice. The great Mrs. Escreet did not regret her bold offer to give her lessons, nor the familiarity with Farover the weekly visit entailed : but she did by slow degrees repent the presentation to Tom.

She tried a bold stroke now. ' Did Tom propose ? ' she queried, smiling.

' Mrs. Escreet ! Of course not.'

' He does not uncommonly, you know. He is soft-hearted. While he was an undergraduate at the House his mother was quite anxious about him. That was before you came out, my dear.'

' I never did come out,' said Rosaline. ' You never do at Oxford, at least in families like ours. Ann and I just went to strings of dances, and put our hair up between two of them. Oh, dear, it was a lovely time ! ' She spoke gravely, wistfully, as of good things past. She was pathetic again, and her voice was prettily modulated. Winifred failed to pat her decision, and even had a pang of regret. No one could have detected it though from her serene

countenance as she entered the drawing-room by the terrace and garden-window, and stood smoothing her slightly ruffled hair, and gazing about her with the same royal, contented air.

‘The great question is,’ she said very gravely, ‘whether we shall have tea first, or music. If Hester has cut the cream sandwiches for four o’clock, they will have lost their first freshness by five. Personally, I sing better after tea than before——’

‘Tea first, then,’ cried Rosaline, who was both hungry, and indifferent to the finest shades in the art of comfort. ‘Oh, *dear* Mrs. Escreet, how delicious!’ She fell upon the freshly gathered piles of rose-leaves, laid out temporarily on a Chippendale table by the window.

Mrs. Escreet looked at her with the ghost of a frown, and rang the bell. Now and then—very rarely, for she saw her at most once a week—Rosaline’s youth gave her a pang, one of those pangs the cleverest woman of forty does not seek to explain. As it happened, few girls haunted her peaceful, beautifully ordered home. When necessary only, as when Tom Champion dined, she invited a young cousin or friend for Gervase to play with: otherwise the flood of youth which at fixed seasons invaded her gates was either necessary relatives, or young men who walked or rode out from Oxford on a Sunday, for half an hour’s chatter and a cup of tea.

The decision sprang full-bodied again, even as her artistic eye approved Rosaline’s attitude, the lines of the young body bent above the fragrant heap of rose-petals, which seemed only a shade more delicate

than the cheek they pressed. She was a nice girl—charming ; but it was better, really, and she must make Gervase see it, that she should continue to haunt the house as a pretty visitor, and at well-spaced intervals only. As such, she was perfect ; but one should beware in life and art of overdoing a good thing.

At six, Gervase Escreet came in from an occasional visit to an Oxford library, and leaving his soft hat in the entry, ran his hands through his hair, and emerged upon the lawn. Sounds of music, floating from the drawing-room, informed him that Winifred's weekly lesson was still in progress. Dropping upon a chair he discovered in the rose-garden, and taking a good sniff at a convenient flower before he felt for a cigarette, Gervase paid a passing tribute of admiration to Winifred's energy. The way, once she had an idea, she pushed it through, devoting herself quite regularly to that girl every mortal Wednesday afternoon, was marvellous. And a girl who would never really sing, too—he differed with Winifred there. With the enthusiasm of the instructor upon her, she had once declared that good singing was only a question of an organ, and brains : and that Rosie had both. Gervase disputed the opinion, and demurred to the facts. The voice was merely ordinary, the cleverness superficial ; and moreover something further was necessary that Miss Maskery had not ; his wife had only to sing herself to prove the truth with shattering force. Where-upon Mrs. Escreet, calling him a sentimental donkey, left the subject.

‘There,’ said Gervase to the roses, as the key changed, and the voice as well. ‘There you are, that’s Win’s idea. What more do you want?’ Then he fell silent, for the song dated back in his memory to their time of courtship; and though now, as then, the melody was cool, and classically rendered, it made him feel more sentimental than ever, and a little old.

Nevertheless, while lightly regretting moments past, Mr. Escreet failed not to savour the moment he had. It is good to hear music, of an evening, in the sweet country air, especially after several hours of an ancient library, amid its smells compact of time-worn leather, and gas, and dust. Few men he knew had such a home, or pure music such as Win’s to turn to after working-time. There was nothing to criticise in Win, or what few remarks captious man could find to make he had long since made. The melody, sanctified by a great name, was unapproachable. The voice, naturally equal and pure, had been trained in youth by a teacher whose name again was sufficient commentary. It was worn a very little—perhaps; but it was her voice, which he had always preferred, and to which he was accustomed. She sang at the right moment too, as Winifred always did, the moment of memories. Where is the harm of memories, when there are none that can sting? Gervase Escreet watched his garden-close with kind eyes, and fingered a crumpled tobacco-flower on the plant beside him. It was waiting its precise moment in the twilight to change from unsightliness into a pure sweet star, generous in blessing. Half-smiling, Gervase opened it de-

liberately with his fingers, and bent to sniff. No, the moment had not come, the flower refused its fragrance. That was a joy to come later, the next on his list of good things, faithfully preparing for him. Mr. Escreet was of the opinion of the old writer of Genesis—for man's service only the birds, beasts, and flowers of earth 'created He them.' He had no more doubt of that white flower being his own to play with than he had of the sole possession of Winifred, singing in the house. It was all good—could barely be improved: or at least he had no will nor energy at the moment to think of improvement.

'Willst du dein Herz mir schenken?' he observed to the pair of performers, when they came out on the lawn. 'Either or both of you, it's all the same to me.'

'Du is a singular pronoun,' returned Rosaline. 'It must be one.'

'Bother,' said Gervase. 'Yes, that's the worst of Germans.'

'I think after that I had better go to Auntie,' said Rosaline, with a pretty prudish air. 'Hadn't I, Mrs. Escreet?'

'Oh, I say,' protested the master of the house, who found that Miss Maskery under his eyes was very different from Miss Maskery, a second-rate performer in the drawing-room. 'Not already. Well, and when do you come to stop?'

He saw he was wrong at once, by the slight change in Winifred's face. A false step had been made, that had to be retraced. Gervase liked to act impulsiveness, but he was not an impulsive man.

He had the cautious, critical brain, always feeling ahead and preparing the way : in which way he stepped with discretion, though gaily, smiling on the world.

As for Rosaline, she was impassive : but her heart leapt up at his words. It was Gervase Escreet himself who had spoken to her chaffingly of Winifred's trouble with her eyes ; and the need, slowly defining itself, of ' some sort of girl ' in the house, to help her, and lighten his own accumulation of writing and copying. She had given the point small thought at the time, but of late her aunt, Mrs. Grayling, had recurred to it, with a significance not to be missed. It might just do for Ann, was Mrs. Grayling's opinion, so much better than the tiring, ill-paid work she was doing in Oxford. Mrs. Grayling hoped she had hinted as much to Mrs. Escreet, who was always so kind and generous. It would be perfect for poor Ann, who could still pursue her political work in the district, and who might even continue to give lessons to her little cousin, as she was doing at present four times in the week, by Mrs. Grayling's arrangement.

Now Rosaline was fond of her sister, for whom she even had a certain admiration ; but privately she considered that ' poor Ann ' would be far better suited by a governess's post at the Vicarage, than by life at Farover. Her aunt had no delicate sense of character, or of the spirit of a place. Even she, Rosaline, would have to adapt herself a little, if she came into the life of Farover, as she hoped and intended to do. She would dress differently, for instance, be less exuberant and active, and take to

reading again. Ann read enough, in truth : but Ann would never enter into the Farover spirit of discussion : the spirit that was critical, but remote : that saw art and literature through a glass screen, as it were, and by many reflected lights : not by the coarse light of day and reason which Ann, clever as she was, would cast upon it. Ann would jar surely ; she would be out of tune ; she could never, never be thought of in conjunction with the wonderful Mrs. Escreet.

During the tête-à-tête she had had with Winifred, she waited eagerly for her to refer to the subject. An opening was easily made, for it was natural to enquire after the defaulting eyes. Winifred admitted, smiling with a good courage, that she had to wear spectacles to read books by night, and music by day : and during the singing-lesson, she wore them rigorously ; but the subject thinned and wore out, and nothing came of it ; so that Rosaline, unwilling to believe that Mrs. Grayling's effort for Ann had had any measure of success, could only suppose that the just moment had not arrived for her hostess to broach the subject with her, and that she must ' stay the very ripening of the time,' even as did all who had concern with the comfort of the Escreets' lives.

She saw now in Winifred's face that the time was not ripe—it was all her sanguine youth would allow her to see ; and she turned the question with eager tact.

' Auntie cannot have me yet, I am afraid,' she said. ' She has promised to find room for Ann, at least for some weeks before the election, but there

is nowhere to put me, even if I cared for it ; and you know I abominate canvassing, and village meetings, and everything Ann most enjoys.'

'Isn't the Grayling child going to school?' said Winifred.

'I hardly think so,' said Rosaline. 'You see, they would like her to, only Muriel herself refuses.'

'They will never get her taught,' said Winifred, with disapproval. 'She is a terrible little savage. Mrs. Grayling has no idea of managing Muriel. There would be room for you and Ann together, Rosie, if she went.'

'So there would,' said Rosaline : her hopes sank lower, for she felt strongly that Farover was shut to her. Something had occurred—she sought in vain for what—to make her less welcome within its gates ; she saw it dimly in her hostess's calm face. It was the fault of the tactless aunt, most probably ; Rosaline had already suffered much from Mrs. Grayling's virtuous efforts for her good.

'I must get back to Ann,' she said. 'It's getting dark, and I have not done those bills. Good-bye and thank you again, dear Mrs. Escreet. I really will try to get the middle notes steadier.'

So she went : and Mrs. Escreet found her comfort distinctly more complete when she was gone.

II

'WHAT'S up about Rosie Maskery?' said Gervase at leisure after dinner. The Escreets never hurried to discuss a thing, even when both knew it was imminent. They shared an understanding so completely, that they both edged off a subject which promised effort until the inevitable moment had come for attacking it. The moment appeared over the silver tea-tray, at nine in the smoking-room.

'I made a bad move, didn't I?' said the master of the house. 'Has she fallen off, Winnie?' In his wife's estimation, he meant—not that Rosaline's hair was dropping.

'Yes,' said Winifred serenely. 'She has gone down one: and Miss Clench has come up. I was going to explain to you about it.'

'Miss Clench?' said Gervase, really surprised. 'Who—do you mean that girl of Brian's? I thought she'd made a mess of it.'

'So she has, poor child,' said Winifred. 'And that is partly why. You must be patient, Gervase.'

Gervase was quite inclined to be patient, having the first wood-fire of the season to look at, an Egyptian cigarette, and a cat upon his knee. It looked at present as if Winifred was being benevolent, but he did not believe that. Pure benevolence

was not her 'form,'—rather that of his bugbear, Mrs. Amabel Grayling. Gervase waited.

'Which shall we take first?' said Winifred. 'Rosaline—very well. Rosaline is nice to look at, she writes a good hand, she knows our ways more or less, and we both like her—pretty well.'

'Awfully,' said Gervase.

'Discount it a little, you know,' said Winifred, 'for the effects of custom. You might get tired of her voice.'

'Might I?' said Gervase. 'Well, now you mention it, I might; but I shouldn't often hear her talking.'

'I should,' said Winifred. 'I am not sure, after a week or two, that Rosaline mightn't chatter.'

'My *dear* Win,' said Gervase, with feeling, 'if you think the daughter of Brian Clench, as I knew him, is not going to chatter——'

'It will be different,' said Winifred calmly. 'I am coming to that presently, you will see. To proceed, Rosaline—there's still a drop, by the way, if you would like a third.'

'Here goes,' said Gervase.

'Just like a man,' said Winifred, reaching the cup. 'Beyond the second, tea's undrinkable. . . . Rosaline, until quite this last year, has always been practically prosperous. She is a girl, anyone can see, who takes to luxury naturally. Not that this is luxury'—and she passed back the cup.

'This is,' said Gervase, receiving it, and crossed his legs. 'Ready, Win. Go on explaining.'

'Well now, you know what I mean, and you might save me the trouble of saying it.'

Rosaline would not assume—but she'd take for granted.'

'An admirable distinction,' said Gervase, sipping.

'Well, why don't you give me better words, if you're particular? I can't pick over lavender and a vocabulary as well. The feeling I want to express is quite natural.'

'Won't Miss Brian take for granted too?' suggested Gervase. 'Her Papa, as far as I remember, took everything for granted, including his own popularity and position in society.'

'I wish you would leave Brian Clench out of it,' said Winifred, with a touch of asperity. 'Miss Brian, as you call her, will not take for granted, for the simple reason that I shall pay her a salary.'

'Oh,' said Mr. Escreet. 'Ah.' He stroked the cat's ears in a reflective manner.

'You have no objection to that, I suppose?'

'Oh, dear, no,' said Gervase. 'It may, as you suggest, obviate much.'

'It determines her position,' said Winifred. 'I could not, of course, offer Rosaline a salary. She would be offended, not to mention her aunt. I should never hear the last of it from Mrs. Grayling. And here we come, Ger, to the next serious objection.'

'Leave it out,' advised Gervase. 'It's quite understood, in this quarter. Have I not suffered, as well as you? It's the plush jacket that does for me.'

'Well,' said Winifred, 'it's the plush jacket that would always be visiting us, if Rosaline was here in the winter. We should never see the last of it, or of

Amabel inside it either. A parsoness's visitation, Gervase, I can stand. I can even ask her to dinner once a quarter, if her husband is there to keep her in order. But to have her dropping in to see her niece, and advising me for her good, and both of them mowing the borders for the Harvest Festival——'

Gervase's deep groan was sufficient commentary. Winifred, having glanced at him once, abandoned Mrs. Grayling and proceeded.

'Finally—where we started, I think—Rosaline is very attractive.'

'I prefer 'em attractive,' said Mr. Escreet.

'I know you do, and I have considered you as well; but I am thinking of more than ourselves.'

'Are you?' said Gervase, growing grave.

'Yes. Rosaline might attract a number of people possibly; but she certainly would attract Tom.'

Gervase was again momentarily interested. 'Tom would never marry her,' he observed. 'He knows his duty better than that.'

'I don't say he would marry her. I don't suppose any of them would. But I don't want to drag his poor mother through all that again.'

Gervase considered Tom Champion's past, which was known to both of them. 'I thought Tom's Ma had contemplated Rosie as governess when the little Clench was chucked,' he said. 'Surely that would have been riskier than here.'

'Not the least risky,' said Winifred. 'If I could get Rosaline into that good place, I should do it to-morrow, and be quit of worrying. She would be under Cousin Grace's eye, and Cousin Grace would

be responsible. On the other hand, if Tom kept mooning about here, she would consider it my fault—even if she doesn't already. It was I who introduced them, under an evil star.'

'Rosie would be a precious governess,' said Mr. Escreet thoughtfully.

'I dare say she would not do it badly,' said Winifred, 'and the salary is good. She is not professional, of course.'

'Is the little Clench professional?' said Gervase.

'I think of her as that sort of girl.'

'I say, do you think of her also as good-looking?'

'No,' said Winifred deliberately.

'Why? Brian was a handsome dog.'

Mrs. Escreet's face changed, and then came straight again. 'A married niece of the Champion's had a look at the girl in Rouen,' she said. 'Rather a wizened little creature, was what she said, though smart enough in her trade.'

Gervase groaned gently again, and begged her for his sake to change the word. Winifred ignored him, and devoted herself to shredding lavender.

'Why doesn't little Rosie marry, Win?' he demanded idly soon.

'Oh, really,' said Winifred. 'One gets tired of asking why pretty and accomplished girls don't marry. I suppose it is the higher education: there are too many of them.'

'Is that what they learn?' enquired Gervase.

'To be sure it is—look at these new University girls. Plainness and strength have long gone out of fashion.'

'I'm glad plainness is out of fashion,' said

Gervase. He observed his wife for a time with satisfaction. 'We have never come to Miss Clench,' he reminded her at last.

'Well, that's not my fault. You kept dragging her in when I talked of Rosalie. I am sure I don't know,' said Winifred, 'what is left to say about her.'

'What's left?—and you the mistress of a household! Everything is to say, to judge by dear Cousin Grace's expression in conversation.'

'Explain what you mean,' said Winifred heartlessly.

'Isn't she—well—a bit of a devil? Hasn't she—well—gone the pace? Really, Win, you might help an unfortunate male man.'

'If you ask me,' said Winifred deliberately, 'whether I think she has been a little fool, I should say yes, certainly. Clenches are bound to be that, sooner or later; and really it's providential for Cousin Grace she broke out when she did.'

'Also for you,' said Gervase, 'since you would have recommended her.'

'Also for me. But—well, it seems fair to the child to give her a second chance. To judge by that niece's account in the spring, she is in very low water.'

Gervase waited.

'Having failed so badly may make her more amenable, there's always that. I should try her for a short term first, of course. She may be out of the question: very likely she will.'

'She got tangled up with a man, didn't she?' said Gervase. 'What's become of the man?'

'Oh, he's gone quite off the scene. She has been

living in exemplary dullness at Rouen with a virtuous and stupid family. I have ascertained all that.'

'Tried to poison herself, didn't she?' said Gervase. 'Or was it another party?'

'Another party,' said his wife. 'A friend of hers, who lived with her in Paris for a time. Really,' she added, frowning, 'I know very little about it.'

'And don't want to know more,' Gervase supplied. 'Those things get happening in France, if you will insist on living there. A very demoralising nation, hey, Mrs. Gummidge?' He rolled his cat over with two fingers, awakening in the process the slit-half of an amber eye, and the hysterical remembrance of a purr. The cat was even more comfortable than Mr. Escreet, and cared nothing for his fingers. 'Anyhow,' he said, 'it will be a bit of excitement in our humdrum lives.' His wife shrugged, shredding lavender. 'I wonder where that thief Brian has got to, Win. Did the girl's last letter give you any light?'

'None. She ignored my question.'

'Humph. He's not dead, or somehow I think we should have heard of it. He would have published his death-bed utterances, or left us all legacies of other people's money, and things of that sort, wouldn't he?'

'I suppose so,' said Winifred. 'Since you suggest it.'

'The little girl may be able to throw light, when we get her here, eh? She must have funds from him, or how could she have been living in these unpaid posts?'

'Oh, naturally,' said Mrs. Escreet, with a slight show of impatience. 'She is taught to keep the counsel of the clan, that's all.'

'Let us hope for good reasons,' added Gervase. Winifred rose, and threw all the stalks of the lavender into the fire.

'Now sniff,' she said to him; and they sniffed in concert.

'It's the littlest tit-bit too like incense,' pronounced Gervase. 'That's the only thing I have against it, as a smell. Sakes alive, Winifred, won't that Clench girl be a Catholic?'

'What then?' said Mrs. Escreet serenely. 'I shall drive her into Oxford to mass in the victoria. It sounds shades more distinguished than the Cathedral. I am not sure I shall not accompany her myself, only you must keep it from Cousin Grace if I do.'

'When is the great scheme to fall due?' was Mr. Escreet's final question: after a little of what Winifred herself called middle-aged flirting.

'Oh, not yet,' she said cheerily. 'I couldn't get ready for her before March. There's Sir George,' she reckoned, 'for a week during the election; and Leila Adair is staying over Christmas, you remember; and I must see the oculist again in February, not to mention Reuss coming over to conduct the "Ring."'

'Just so,' said Gervase, gravely accepting this crowded programme for the winter season. 'Well, then, we have time to get used to it, haven't we?'

They separated, as ever in complete sympathy and on a common understanding, though such

small communication had taken place. All the necessary 'explaining' had been done between them, and they had the same soothing fact to console: that the splash in the tranquil waters of Farover, with its possible rocking of their well-balanced lives, was not to take place 'just yet.'

III

To Winifred's great surprise, Miss Clench did not jump at her proposal. Indeed it needed so considerable an effort, and so many letters, to get her to come to Farover at all, that she nearly gave it up in disgust, and fell back on Rosaline. Rosaline was still waiting for anything that might turn up, foisted off upon Oxford friends, while Ann, indispensable and unrequited as usual, made herself the right hand of Mr. Champion's electoral agent in the Stackfield district. Winifred herself, beyond the entertainment of a single member of Parliament who happened also to be an old friend, kept herself apart from Election vulgarities and distractions. She believed that Gervase had recorded a vote for her cousin on polling-day, but she could not even be sure of that, since she would not mention the subject, and he talked of other things. What was more to the point, his elaborate notes were beginning to take book-form, the copying he required constantly worried her eyes, and the 'some sort of a girl' began to be quite badly needed.

Miss Clench's handwriting, though odd and rapid, was very readable, and Gervase said that so far as that went, she would do. The difficulty was, the things she chose to write with it. Whatever she was, she was not the clinging, droll, insinuating girl one would have expected of her parentage. Her

letters were crisp and cool. She made very definite provisions, as though it were in some sort her business to guard her future from half-expected mishap; she was evidently not indifferent to money, when Winifred skimmed the subject; and she was only occasionally wistful. Winifred did not much like Harrie from her letters; but she was curiously spurred by them all the same, and she pinned the girl down at last, though at the cost of some effort, as has been said.

The effort was concerned with the placing of a kind of dog of Harrie's, a German woman in reduced circumstances, who would not live far from her, and when she came to England, must needs come too. This creature, warmly recommended by Miss Clench, was fortunately most modest in her requirements; and when, by a really strenuous effort of brain, the needs of Muriel Grayling at the Vicarage occurred to Winifred's mind, the person accepted the post eagerly for a nominal salary, less even than Ann Maskery had been receiving. This stroke of genius Mrs. Escreet accomplished in a single morning, acquiring virtue, as it were, on all sides, while serving her central purpose. Ann, who was desperately busy for the moment canvassing and cajoling the ignorant elector, was frankly relieved by the proposal. Muriel's mother, whom a few hours of Muriel completely exhausted, was almost tearful with gratitude. Muriel herself, freed of the maddening vision of a boarding-school in January, promised herself much innocent amusement from the German lady's acquaintance; and her father only thanked fortune that the person was a Protestant.

Thus it came to pass that the first place where Harriet called, on her arrival in Stackfield after her long journey, was at the parsonage. The Escreets considered the Graylings' living-rooms a nightmare of comfortless disorder ; but to Harrie's eyes, used to the sheer penury of a Rouen flat, the parlour seemed very inviting and comfortable.

' You will be happy here, Bertha,' she murmured. ' Don't cry. Yes, wait : I will come in with you a moment.'

Muriel, aged twelve, was excited, and had prepared a rowdy welcome for the shrinking stranger who pretended to teach her ; but she retreated rather awed at the sight of a second visitor.

' Muriel, is it ? ' said Harrie gently. ' Is your mother there—I should just like to see her.'

Muriel led them in, and Mrs. Grayling rose up to meet them from a hard sofa. She was a thin woman with projecting teeth, worn eyes, and scanty hair ; she could never have had any claims to beauty, and untiring work in the parish and at home had not improved her appearance. She identified Harriet without an introduction, and received her coldly : then, turning to Bertha, she took her hand, and with a few low words of earnest goodwill, saved her from the threatening storm of tears.

' She will be all right in an hour,' said Mrs. Grayling. ' It was kind of you to bring her in. You both talk English, I suppose.'

Her worn grey eyes, very still and piercing, were turned upon Miss Clench. Mrs. Grayling had been talking with Mrs. Champion about this girl, that very afternoon. Madame Barrière's distorted story

had been, by devious ways, slowly filtering through the parish ; though filtering is not the word, for it was cleared of nothing in the process. Mrs. Grayling was not all at sure, wonderful as Mrs. Escreet was, and enviable in her wide-minded knowledge of the world, if she had done right to bring the subject of such reports into the village. She had not the air of a penitent now, as she stood under the central light, with the rough-haired Muriel pressing up to her side. She was watching the girl more than her friend, Mrs. Grayling noticed.

‘Fräulein Lindt speaks English very well,’ was her reply to the last question. The child, who had no manners, had seized her rough fur necklet, and was stroking its dependant head.

‘Where does he come from?’ she asked.

‘From a French shop,’ replied Harrie. ‘And before that from a farther place, I shouldn’t wonder.’

‘A *really* far place?’ said Muriel.

‘Out and beyond the world.’ Miss Clench was absently grave.

‘I’m going there,’ Muriel exclaimed. ‘D’you—d’you mean in America?’

‘Well,’ said Miss Clench, ‘there are hunters in Canada, I’ve heard.’

‘D’you know all about it?’ The child’s eyes shone as she still teased the fur. ‘Will—will you come with me, when I go?’

‘My pet,’ said Mrs. Grayling anxiously, ‘this lady has just come over the sea to live with Mrs. Escreet.’ With Muriel, her mother had still the trick of childish phrases.

‘ Oh !—then doesn’t she want to come ? ’ The child’s face dropped. ‘ Well, dash it all,’ she said, ‘ as if I cared.’ Her mother winced, and tried awkwardly to put a hand across her mouth ; but Miss Clench did not seem to notice.

‘ I’d give half my fortune to go,’ she said in her weary little voice. ‘ Only it wouldn’t get me half the way. But there’s a time for all things : and one of these days—you’ll see.’

With that she nodded at Muriel, and shortly afterwards she disappeared into the dark again. Muriel opened and shut her mouth many times during the next half-hour, as though things were stirring in her spirit that she could say ; but the singular result of Miss Clench’s visit was that eventually—that is, at bed-time—she had not made as much noise as usual.

Meanwhile, Harriet received the kindest of welcomes from Mr. and Mrs. Escreet : so kind as to be almost confusing, especially as they were both a little nervous. The girl was passive with weariness, and did not talk much ; but in what she did say she was so childish as to take them both aback. The master of the house, who in order to fill up awkward pauses had made himself most droll and delightful, gave vent to this astonishment at dinner.

‘ Are you old enough,’ he enquired, ‘ to have wine ? Perhaps you have never dined downstairs before.’

Miss Clench took him in, and she had eyes which understood.

'As to floors,' she said, 'I have not had much choice. I've had a flat life. Isn't that what you call it?'

'I dare say I should if I knew,' said Gervase, who was carving. 'She's had a flat life, Winifred. Can't we give her a tall one, for a change?'

'You would cut straighter if you talked less nonsense,' said Mrs. Escreet, who had an aspect of unspeakable soft dignity in her beautiful dinner-gown. Miss Clench did not stare, she noticed, but gave her a flashing look from time to time. She was plainly, even poorly dressed herself, in black serge, but what little linen and lace appeared was arranged with French neatness and delicacy.

'What is a tall life?' enquired Harrie.

'A life,' said Gervase, struggling with the joint, 'which it is really impossible to believe. . . . Did you never meet anybody who had led one?'

'Gervase!' exclaimed Winifred; and then, the instant afterwards added, 'You are splashing the gravy.'

To his great surprise the girl laughed at his second remark, which had been innocent enough of intention, and looked straight at him.

'Oh, yes, sir,' she said. 'And have you as well?'

'I have, to be sure,' said Mr. Escreet, searching rather wildly for something further that was foolish to say, for Winifred's tone had been in warning. He had meant no reference to Brian, and he could not be sure the girl had suspected one. If she had, she was certainly not offended: which was again—odd.

'How old are you, really?' he said, to cover his confusion. 'Whisper—I will not tell her.'

'I am eighteen and a half,' said Miss Clench gently. 'I do not wish to conceal it.'

Gervase sat down after his labours, and put his two fists on the table to rest them. 'But you must,' he said solemnly. 'You must. I can't have a secretary of that age; my club would lose all respect for me.'

'Not if the secretary was a good one,' said Harrie. Her forehead knit up in a small straight line. 'I'd dearly like to have my own age again,' she said. 'I have been living beyond it: adding a bit, you know, to make people think better of me.'

'How old were you in Rouen?' said Winifred, glancing at her husband.

'Twenty-three,' the girl confessed.

'And how many birthdays did you have?' said Gervase.

'None at all.' Mr. Escreet thumped the table gently with his fist.

'That's where the mistake is,' he said. 'When people don't keep their real birthdays carefully, they lose all conscience. Do you mean the birthday passed—blank?' He gesticulated with two hands. 'No letters—parcels: nothing red or green?'

'Nothing at all, this last one.'

'Winifred,' said Mr. Escreet, with an air of reproachful suffering, 'no wonder this life is a flat one.'

Winifred met his gaze with another equally expressive. 'Do you mean,' she said, in her smooth, equable tone, 'that your father does not write to you, my dear?'

Harrie blushed a little. 'I mean,' she said, 'that I do not get his letters. He may well have written, to the house I lived in last year.'

'What, and they have not sent it on to you?'

'They have not,' said Harrie, and rested her fair head on her hand. 'I should have arranged it at the Versailles post-office perhaps—but I left there in a hurry. And the directions I have sent them since have no effect: people in post-offices are so stupid, are they not? Doubtless it is the heat.'

Both host and hostess gazed at her helplessly.

'But you mean then,' said Winifred at last, 'that your father has lost you.'

'Yes, he has lost me,' said Harrie, and there was a marked note of eagerness in her voice. 'I am afraid he has.'

When she rose from the table she looked so tired, that Winifred saved her from Gervase, and sent her to bed.

'Do not bother to unpack,' she said, as she held the girl's little hand uncertainly. 'Hester will do it.'

'Oh, it will not take long,' said Harriet.

She would fain have had her new room to herself on arrival, but the serious maid was there, opening drawers and hanging things in cupboards.

'It is not crushed, I hope,' said Harrie, of what she was hanging. 'That is my only dress.'

It was the same blue dress of which Madeleine had spoken with approval, and it was one of Brian's presents to her, sent in kind, not in the form of money. You cannot pawn a ready-made dress—

particularly if it is your own colour and fits you—however much you may be of the saving and ant-like disposition.

‘It is not crushed at all, miss,’ said Hester. ‘It couldn’t have got so, packed in the manner it was.’ Hester was an accomplished maid, and her approbation was worth having. Harrie looked pleased, as she sat down rather lifelessly before the glass.

‘Shall I do your hair, miss?’ said Hester. Young men calling on the Escreets found Hester paralysing, her manner was so capable, and so cloistrally severe. A very young man was always certain he had turned up the wrong corner, or left the wrong card.

‘Oh, do,’ said Miss Clench. ‘That’s the kind thought to have, when I am so tired.’

Hester smiled grimly, standing aside from the looking-glass, and brushed out the curly hair, admiring it as she brushed. Harrie said nothing to her at all; her face in the mirror was set and pondering; she only thanked the maid with a smile before she left the room.

‘She’s not a tattler,’ said Hester, with approval in the kitchen. ‘Not a question did she ask me, though she had the chance: not that she’d have got an answer if she had. But she’s the bonniest little face on her, and as tired as a baby. I’d have liked to have kissed her, only she was that grave and innocent.’

The cook was impressed, for Hester’s opinion went for something in the household. ‘Not much luggage she had,’ observed the cook. ‘John carried it up single-’anded.’

‘She’s nothing,’ said Hester. ‘Except, of course,

what a young lady must have. You may take my word for it, Marion, she's *nothing*.'

There was a scandalised pause again.

'What's her father been doing?' said the cook.

'You said she had a father, didn't you?'

'Ah—she's got his portrait,' said Hester. Her grimness was extreme.

'Sure of it, are you?' said the cook.

'Mrs. Escreet has a signed one, another view.'

Hester paused. 'Whatever *he's* doing, it's not his duty.'

'They're pore,' said the cook, with condescension.

'Poor or not, I know what I'm talking of.'

The cook Marion was discreet, being of one season's standing. 'He was here soon after their marriage, weren't he?' she suggested. 'I remember you once said you had it from old Kate.' She alluded to one of the stories of the household, passed down in all good country families.

'He never came into a house,' said Hester, 'except to turn it upside-down. That's the sort *he* was, and all the young servants loving him.'

'Did he get what he come for?' said Marion.

'He did and more. Pounds,' said Hester, 'he must have had from them, and not one, you mark my words, but both. I never knew a man like him—not that I knew him direct. But the talk he made would last a house a life-time.'

'What was her mother?' said the cook, returning after a respectful interval to Harrie.

'I don't know and don't want to,' said Hester. She added inconsequently, 'Whoever it was, I'm sorry for her.'

The cook sniffed: a demonstration in the kitchen world that means many things.

'She called me "sir,"' said Mr. Escreet, walking the drawing-room in comic consternation. 'What have I done, at my age, to be addressed as "sir" by a little school-marm baggage of eighteen?'

'I thought it,' said Winifred slowly, 'not unsuitable.'

'What?' said Gervase, stopping.

'Well,' said his wife, looking him over with kind eyes at leisure, 'it was not an entirely easy situation for anybody. But if you ask me, I think the girl hit it off, on the whole, in dress and manner as well, better than we did ourselves.'

'What did we leave out?' said Gervase, scratching his well-shaven cheek.

'It's what we put in.' Winifred smiled at his face. 'No, really, I ask you, Ger, with the future before us, is it quite fair to begin by treating a salaried companion like—well, your favourite niece?'

'Niece?' murmured Gervase. 'Oh, say granddaughter at once.' He looked disturbed, though still comical. 'It's the age of the creature,' he said.

'It's an annoyance, I own, her being so young—granted it's true, of course.'

'True?' said Mr. Escreet, his face lengthening.

'It's quite a degree more pathetic to appear as eighteen, especially if she suspects certain tales have preceded her.'

'Oh, aren't you a little rough on her?' said Gervase.

‘No, I’m reasonable. You must,’ said Winifred, ‘remember to reckon in her birth and up-bringing : not only what she is, but what others have been before her. She comes knowing we have no chance of testing her statements, doesn’t she ? Well, that, to a person of imagination, is a temptation as it stands. A young appearance would be another : though one knows that American complexion may be any age.’

Gervase’s face was still long. ‘There’s no time,’ he declared, ‘for her to be more than one-and-twenty. Think of the date of our own marriage, Win. You are not pretending to assert the Clench was married when he came ?’

‘Why not ?’ said Winifred, rather bitterly. ‘However, I do not assert it. She need not have taken off more than a year or two. Considering the date of the supposed esclandre, eighteen is—well, artistic.’

Gervase tramped about again before he came to his next stop. They must always find something to argue, he and Win ; but to-night an unaccustomed necessity weighed upon him. He took a bold step.

‘Aren’t you judging her on her father ?’ he said.

‘We have nothing else at present to judge her on,’ answered Winifred quietly. ‘And she is very like him.’

‘Like Brian ?’ cried Mr. Escreet.

‘You mean you did not see the likeness ?’ Mrs. Escreet had risen too ; she leant against the high fire-place, shielding her face from the blaze with one hand. ‘However, that is not the point, as it

happens, for a girl's education depends on the other side.'

'The mother, eh?'

'The thing I must make it my business to find out, is what the mother was worth: whether the child had any early education worth the name. I want to avoid sentimentality, Gervase, and get facts.'

'Facts, to be sure,' said Mr. Escreet.

'I don't want to spoil the girl,' said Winifred in measured tones. 'I want to reinstate her: to start her in an honest life, here or elsewhere, if only for her father's sake.'

Her voice had sunk rather on the last phrase, and Gervase was silent for a period. He was impressed, as Winifred had always easily impressed him; she looked perfectly splendid, leaning against the oaken chimney-piece, and backed by a Chinese screen of silk and gold; but for all his habit of admiration, there was something separate moving within him as well. It was quite vague, this feeling. He was not desperately critical, either of her or of others, asking only for an easy life: but his wits were lively this evening, owing to unlooked-for excitement or good wine, and he seemed to see, in her late admirable attitude, an inconsistency. The little Clench was to be made honest—was that it, by chance?—for her father's sake: while the dishonesty charged to her was largely that father's legacy. Winifred's logic was so habitually superior to his own, that it was hardly in Gervase to suspect it. He preferred to prowl about the soft carpet, and fix a good point of view from which to enjoy her against the screen.

‘Do you mean to keep her, then?’ he said in his usual manner of idle sympathy.

‘How can I pronounce, the first evening?’ said Winifred, turning on him good-humouredly. ‘You are really too absurd, Gervase. She seems quite a nice little thing; and she has got a look about her as if she might be useful.’

‘To somebody,’ suggested Gervase.

‘To somebody, of course. Whether she suits this house,’ said Winifred, ‘is another question.’

IV

SURPRISING though it might seem, Miss Clench had two letters waiting for her on the breakfast-table the next morning, both, Mrs. Escreet observed, in a masculine handwriting. This entertained her : but she made no remark to Gervase, who was starting off early to his Oxford library. Oxford was only two stations away from Stackfield by train, but Gervase, who was proud of his energy and athletic figure, preferred his bicycle on all but the worst mornings.

‘ She is late,’ he observed, looking at the empty place.

‘ She was tired,’ said Winifred, ‘ and I told Hester not to wake her. It seems,’ she added to amuse him, ‘ that she brought an alarum clock, which Hester had the sense to leave among the papers in her trunk. This morning I shall have the trunk put in the garret, so we shall not, at any rate, be teased with that.’

‘ Poor little person,’ said Gervase, rather sadly. He made his final preparations. His wife gave him three violets for his buttonhole, and debated for five minutes whether to add a leaf.

‘ Remember to think really hard about the sixth man for dinner on the eighteenth,’ she said. ‘ Whatever you do, don’t be in a hurry, for there is Grace

to please as well as me ; and do try to be back in time for luncheon.'

Then she turned back to the morning-room, and directed Hester about Miss Clench's breakfast.

'The young lady says she will only take a cup of coffee,' observed Hester.

'Dear, dear,' said Winifred. 'It doesn't mean she is ill, I suppose?'

'In quite good spirits,' said Hester demurely. 'Shall I put the letters on the tray, madam?'

'No : I will bring them,' said Mrs. Escreet, laying a hand upon them. 'I am coming up directly.'

However, Miss Clench did not even look at her letters when they were passed to her, she was so eager to apologise.

'It's dreadful of me,' she said, sitting up in bed to clasp her knees. 'And I told Hester, it's not that I don't know the English habits. I have been looking it up to be quite sure, and I know exactly what you do all day.'

'What do we do, I wonder?' laughed Winifred, sitting down. 'I am surprised you found books of reference, my dear.' The appellation was out before she knew it : the girl, with her hair loose against the frilled pillows, looked so ridiculously young.

'Oh, I could get some English books there—and there were Brian's old letters to help. You'll excuse me calling my father that,' she added quickly. 'For I know you were acquainted.'

'I suppose one of those is not from him,' said Winifred carelessly. Harriet glanced at the pair as they lay in her hand. 'No,' she said, and blushed

a little. 'These are friends. Oh, dear, they have found my address very quickly, haven't they?'

Winifred hardly knew what to make of this; it looked like over-acted innocence.

'Do you not like receiving letters?' she asked.

'I love it,' said Miss Clench with decision.

'You have some regular correspondents, then?'

'Well—only one that's regular.' She glanced at the letters again and laughed.

'I see,' said Mrs. Escreet, rising. 'Well, I would not prevent you from reading your correspondence. Will you come down when you are ready, and you shall see the place a little. You will want to take your bearings—vous orienter, hein?' She smiled.

'I do that pretty quick,' said Harriet. 'Is there no work to do?'

'Gervase has left some lists, he said: but really there's no hurry. As for me, let's see——' Mrs. Escreet considered serenely. 'Can you copy music, I wonder?'

'I can,' said Harrie, in an Irish flash without winking. 'Why, there,' she added, 'I had forgotten, and, of course, my father told me.'

'What did he tell you?' said Winifred, stopping short.

'Only that you had music like few he had known.' Harrie added almost at once,—'He meant, of course, out of the profession.'

The magnificent Mrs. Escreet felt not exactly offended, but the edges of her serenity were ruffled. She remembered in a rush how often the detrimental Brian had ruffled it. With him, it was a curiously tolerable experience: but the manner, as aped by

a girl, almost reached impudence. She was calm, however, merely noting it down among her morning's impressions.

'You are not a musician yourself, I suppose,' she said.

'Not I, no,' said Harrie. 'But it's as well,' she added, her grey-blue eyes gazing sadly out of the window, 'for I wouldn't have got my living by it, anyway.'

'Anyhow,' Winifred corrected mechanically. 'Excuse me—your English for the most part is very good: but 'anyway' sounds vulgar.'

'I am sorry, I am sure,' murmured little Miss Clench. Winifred proceeded.

'Why should you not have got your living by music? Many people do.'

'They're exceptions if they manage it,' said Harriet, 'which I am not. There's nothing exceptional about me.' She gazed with the same serious eyes at her hostess.

'There is teaching——' Mrs. Escreet was cut off.

'Teaching, oh, yes. But that I never could have borne.'

'You surely cannot tell till you try,' argued Winifred, vexed again. Had she not herself condescended to give a music-lesson—at least once a week?

'Oh, I've tried it,' responded the irritating Irish-woman lightly. 'I've tried a number of things in my time.'

Mrs. Escreet retired, with as much dignity as she could muster, closing the door with careful quietness. This girl, she decided in the drawing-room, was

not going to be as simple as she looked to manage. One thing was clear as well to Mrs. Escreet's mind : to be as sharp as that, she could not possibly be eighteen.

Harrie read her letters : Pat's first and then Geoffrey's.

' My DEAR MISS CLENCH,' wrote Geoffrey,

' Your last found me in despair over my play, but now I believe I have succeeded. When I am like that I do not write to anybody, for I crowd my own business and my own woes upon them. Thanks to your hint, Vanessa is much better. It never struck me those few words of Churchill's would make her so furious—but I saw you were right, and I changed her answer. After which I found that speech threw out the whole scene following, and I re-wrote the lot to tone. Now I am so pleased with it and her that I am itching to read it to somebody. If only Pat were here : he used to annoy me, he was so careless, but he generally threw light on something, whether the thing I asked or another : and he always knew by a kind of second-sight what was impossible.

' I have been a sad time over this play, but Thorn-tree has heard it unfinished, and I think it will really see the stage in London in May or June. Then I shall have to follow it—if only to keep an eye on Vanessa. Tell me if you hear anything of a girl called Elsie Bridgnorth, who is probably to play her. How dares she or any Elsie undertake it ?

' I should like to know how you get on, and be kept

up-to-date in the collecting. I hope these people will look after you, and not let you have colds so often. I should like to say—do not judge England by its country couples, but as they are a serious weight in English opinion, I can't. Go to Oxford, won't you, it's my town: and it means more than London and more than Eton (Cambridge I don't allude to) in what we have been and shall be. Find a tree that touches the ground in New College, and sit under it on Sunday evening between five and six. There used to be a local dryad there.

'Yours very sincerely,

'G. HORN.'

'Madame Rochette has indulged in another "attaque," and I suppose I must let her come to London. I prevaricated adroitly with Morough, so I thought: but when he telegraphed for your address, *reply paid*, what could I do?'

Harriet replied to him in sections all that week, and sent the whole within the fortnight, which was prompter than her wont. Neither his epistolary form nor hers demanded a reply. She often held his letters back, and sent them when a letterless condition could suddenly be borne no longer. As often she tore up the little budget, or dropped it in the fire. 'That's no good to him or me,' she generally observed aloud as she did so. This week, however, whether it were that her new circumstances spurred her to confidence, or that she really needed his opinion, the letter of unprofitable commentary on life was despatched. Characteristically, the real anxiety stood first, for Harrie never 'com-

posed' her letters—a thing of which her 'correspondante,' it must be owned, was guilty.

'What am I to think of Patrick?' she began. 'Here he writes to me to say he is taking a holiday, because he has been ill. From what you know of schools, do you think it is true they would let him? I am enquiring to find out, for I know they do have a great long holiday over here, in some places in the springtime. But that would be Easter, would it not? And now it is not even the *Mi-carême*. I should be so vexed, if he betrayed his employer for me.

'I am troubled about the illness too, if it is the truth he is telling. He says there is a doctor at Oxford he might visit—well, to be sure there are several, and would be in any town. If it's that cough he once talked of, Oxford is surely not the place to come to, for this is a climate like a swamp. I am wondering, sir, if he has written anything about this to you as well, for Brian was always free with his letters when he had some complaints to make. Yet Brian was strong, and Patrick has never been that. By which I mean, those that are born delicate complain more rarely, and so are the harder to help.'

That was the first day's contribution, and the writer was so worried that she very nearly posted it. However, a night's rest made her think better of it, and she waited to add some information.

'Farover is well-named,' she proceeded, 'for it is very lofty. By that I do not mean that the roof is high, only that you cannot help feeling at the top of things, safe and surprised at anybody troubling. I am surprised at myself when I get into the mood.

A bow-shot from the brown gate there is the Parsonage, and there's trouble there again. I thought the lady Mrs. Grayling a hard woman, but it seems she is kind to Bertha, and harassed with the child. Her husband is the clergyman, and came to see me thinking to have me for his church. I was sorry to tell him I could not, for it seemed no way to make acquaintance. Indeed, he seems to have forgotten I exist since then, and never notices me.

'Mr. and Mrs. Escreet I have collected on the chance, for they seem to be wonderful people. I have no doubt she is in Brian's collection as it is, remembering the way he would speak of her beauty, so I have her by inheritance. She's difficult too, as we say in France: she will not have a stick out of place, in the house or garden, and she does not like remarks. Mr. Escreet is very clever, writing books like you for his pleasure. He is more disorderly even than Brian, though he has the most expensive arrangements. I cannot get his papers straight, and he for ever finding new ones.'

Here the letter-writer paused again, and started anew later with apology.

'I cannot get this letter written, and I want you to know them all at least a little. There is Hester, and the cook, and John, who have all done things for me since I came. Hester is quiet company, but you should see the work she does—I mean with the needle. I told her I had been misled as to English sewing, believing they never stirred a finger over there without machines. I shall have her to make some things for me—but why am I talking of this? The footman John has made her offers for years past,

it seems, and she refusing him steadily. I should think he might go on to the end of time, to judge by his mechanical appearance. Yet it is a pity she will not think of it, for the Farover lodge they would have is a little dear house, where anyone could be happy. I like these English house-servants, though I really do not see how they find enough to do.

‘Beyond these there is Miss Maskery, who comes for singing on Wednesdays, and Mr. Thomas Champion, who comes to see her. At least Mrs. Escreet will have it that it is only by chance he comes to tea, but it becomes a queer chance, wouldn’t you say, when it has happened twice in succession? I laughed when I first saw Mr. Tom. Though it was rude enough I could not help it, for it came back to me something Madame Barrière once said about him, in the days when they thought of me for a governess in his mother’s house. You can often save up a laugh even when you do not feel like it at the time: and poor Mr. Tom, standing surprised, had the benefit.

‘The odd thing is that Miss Maskery is trying now for the post I missed, and as Mrs. Escreet considers, likely to get it, for the woman they have is a failure. Risings Park is a bigger house even than Farover—what would I have done there? I should have been lost in it entirely. Yet I would sooner now have that work with children than what I have taken, though I am shy to repeat it to my employers. It takes you up more, and saves considering. A little child comforts your heart, the way it puts its claim upon you, when your mind is in other things.’

She added up the side, as though an after-thought :

‘ These two, Mr. Tom and Miss Rose, I have not collected. For though I have talked to both, I do not seem to know them much.’

V

AMONG the varied and irregular small duties required of her, Harriet discovered that she had frequently to see visitors for the mistress of the house, who possessed a special hiding-place of her own in what she carelessly called her 'shed' in the garden. Harrie had generally to judge—with Hester's experienced help—which visitor might on no account be allowed to suspect Winifred was in reach of a call, and which she would be decidedly vexed to miss. One of those, however, who presented no difficulty in the matter of this choice, was Mrs. Grayling ; for Mrs. Escreet always blessed any agent of fate who relieved her of the Vicar's wife.

'Plush in the avenue,' announced Gervase, who was gardening, in the deliberately disreputable undress from which, when he wore it in full sunlight, Harriet could hardly turn her eyes. It amazed her in the 'smart' man he was, that he could appear before his wife, that merciless critic of exteriors, in such harlequin guise, and without rebuke.

'I have sighted plush,' said Gervase, peering into the shed as he flitted past. 'Run, Harriet, and protect us.' For the Escreeets had soon decided to adopt her christened name, as the recurrence of the Clench, not to mention the Miss, annoyed their

fastidious ears. They agreed in so doing that 'the mother' had better have called her Jane at once; and Mr. Escreet frequently used, in pronouncing the name, a comic emphasis.

'Tell her that up to a guinea I'll subscribe,' said Winifred, as Harrie rose obedient, 'to whatever it happens to be. But I will not open anything, or address anybody: and I decline to hear the school-children sing.'

So Harriet went, certain in advance that her appearance would not be welcome to the visitor. Nor was it evidently, though Mrs. Grayling had the professional manner of being pleased to meet her.

'I did want to catch Mrs. Escreet herself if possible,' she said, plunging awkwardly into affairs, and neglecting any previous acquaintance with the girl before her.

'She will be sorry,' said Harrie, who inherited from her father a useful talent of lying convincingly. 'This weather it is tempting to be out-of-doors.'

Mrs. Grayling sighed, whether at the remark or her own thoughts, sitting heavily upon an uncomfortable chair. Then, recollecting herself, she smiled brightly.

'I should be thankful, I suppose, to have got so far,' she said. 'I really think it ought to be a very good programme.'

'A soirée?' said Harrie at a venture: then corrected herself; 'a village entertainment?'

'Our Concert,' explained Mrs. Grayling, in an undertone, 'for the Restoration.'

'Oh,' murmured Harrie, rightly concluding by the tone that the ugly little church was in question.

She felt a shyness of further enquiry on the sacred subject, for the Vicar's wife's piercing eyes were looking through her sadly. She felt the church was not considered her concern—that she was, in the opinion of the Vicarage, entirely unworthy of living in its neighbourhood.

'Well,' said Harrie, to brighten matters up, for the atmosphere of plush jacket was depressing, 'and it's the music you want, or the money?'

This was the cheerful way in which Miss Clench habitually did business; yet, though there was nothing impolite in her manner, it made Mrs. Grayling visibly shrink.

'The parish lends the room,' she explained in the same low tone. 'The profits, I hope, will easily cover the gas. Programmes, if the curate announces, are unnecessary.' She cleared her voice, and gathered the plush jacket a little higher round her thin throat. 'I hope myself to accompany,' she said, 'but I should like there to be a second string if I failed.'

'But you mustn't think of it,' cried Harrie. 'I am sure you will have plenty as it is, receiving all the people.' She moved the rocking-chair invitingly, but Mrs. Grayling, with the same bright mechanical smile, shook her head.

'So it was Mrs. Escreet you wanted to come and accompany,' said Miss Clench, pushing forward the business another stage.

'Oh, never!' Mrs. Grayling started. 'How could you imagine I would ask for that? If Mrs. Escreet were so wonderfully kind as to play once, and to let Rosie Maskery sing just one of her lighter

songs. Rosie will not promise, I know, without her permission, when she has been so kind in training her. That is what I wished to ask—if she would mind.'

'I am sure not,' said Harrie. 'I will let you know to-day.'

'Thank you—thank you. With that I am sure we should be quite safe, and they would all be so delighted. As luck would have it, I find my governess is a wonderful musician, and ready to help us.' It was clear that in the distraction of parochial matters, Mrs. Grayling had forgotten the connection between Mrs. Escreet's companion, and her governess; or else she had prepared the whole speech beforehand for Winifred's ears, and it would not bear rearranging.

'You know that probably,' she added, recollecting with a new effort the connection of the pair. 'You know Miss Lindt.'

'Miss Lindt'll play all night unless you stop her,' said Harrie, smiling. 'That'll be the trouble: but I'll manage it. I am used to her. I suppose I may come to help?'

'Why yes, to be sure—I ought to have asked you. But I supposed—if Mrs. Escreet came——'

'I'm her shadow,' laughed Harrie. 'Oh dear, I do wish you'd rest in the rocking-chair. It's fidgeting here for an occupant.' Mrs. Grayling, after a moment's stiff pause, did as she was requested. Harrie thought she had never seen anyone look so tired. 'As for accompanying,' she proceeded, 'I am really quite fit for it myself, if you like a change.'

'Oh—if Mrs. Escreet would let you—that——'

'If she'd let me,' agreed Harriet demurely. 'Would I have to ask her?'

'Well,' said Mrs. Grayling, somewhat disturbed to be applied to, 'I should think you know best. I have no idea—she is most kind——'

'Most kind,' Harrie thought, 'on all hands, I notice; but how she rides on these people, all the same.' She was silent, considering; leaning forward with her fingers clasped, and her elbows on her knee.

'Are you not used,' said Mrs. Grayling, 'to being a companion?'

'No,' said Harriet. 'I'd sooner be a friend.'

Again she took the Vicar's wife aback by her directness.

'I'm not complaining,' added Miss Clench, 'only there are some things I can't be, and I believe companion's one of them. You would not believe it, I suppose, if I said I envied Bertha down with you.'

'Why should I not believe it?' said Mrs. Grayling quickly. She was a sincere woman, and her spirit sprang to meet a straight statement. Experience of the poorer classes does not lead one to suspect bluntness: rather to catch at it among the vast social tissues of pretence.

'There's nothing to do here,' explained Harrie, gripping her fine little fingers together. 'And Mrs. Escreet wants no one to help her. A clever servant could do what I do in her odd hours; and everyone here has time to spare. It's just the fact I'm telling you,' she added lightly, 'not that I'm anyway unhappy.'

'I did not suppose you were,' said Mrs. Grayling.

She frowned a little, for she had never met a case quite like this before. Her husband of course would say the girl was no affair of hers : and she endeavoured to think as he did. ' Many people would envy you,' she went on, still in the manner of instruction or reproof. ' Nor do I think Miss Lindt finds us at all easy at the Vicarage. Muriel alone——' Her voice broke and she swallowed something.

' You're anxious about her,' said Harrie, having left a little pause. She had met Bertha once, and knew more about the Vicarage skeleton than Mrs. Grayling thought : for Bertha, though unobservant, was by no means imperceptive.

' Anxious ? ' Then she had it all. Either there was something in the soft beam of her eyes, as straight as Mrs. Grayling's in their glance ; or the poor woman herself was overwrought, and the breaking-point came upon her at the wrong moment, before she was aware. She only conquered hysteria by a mighty effort, which Harriet perceived. The trouble itself was no uncommon one, concerning mainly a didactic, unsympathetic father, and a rebellious child.

' Muriel's taken to you, I don't know why,' she said, and repeated in her distraction more than once. ' I don't know if you can do anything. She has asked about you at dinner till—till her father lost his temper. I am always afraid her father will be rough with her—she takes after him in some ways : and I can't do more than I do, I really can't.' Again for a time she could not speak. ' She sets all the village against us by her untruths. She will

take no teaching, least of all religious. She uses dreadful words—she won't think of confirmation—she denies the faith.'

Harriet did not smile. 'Does she think she has another?' she said.

'Of course not—at twelve—heaven knows what she thinks, nor where she gets it from. I only know she is naughty—often a wicked girl. And yet she is my child, and I cannot tell her so—I try to be patient.' Mrs. Grayling wiped her brow—not her eyes—with a clean, coarse handkerchief, and tried to calm her desperate agitation. 'I really have so little time,' she said, in nearly her ordinary tone.

'To be sure you haven't,' said Miss Clench thoughtfully. 'And is Bertha no use to you either?'

'Oh yes, she is,' said the poor mother eagerly, 'and I ought to be thankful to have Miss Lindt. She seems to manage the child in the mornings, though sometimes they make a great noise together. Muriel is even interested, and repeats what she says after lessons.'

'You have her in the afternoon?'

'While Miss Lindt practises, that is all. I like to have her—often.' She smiled that glassy bright smile again, that made Harrie furious with pity, as towards a suffering animal. Something told her quick instinct that one who so smiled was almost breaking. She asked for no further history, no more tags and rags of awkward evidence, no further popular opinion even. The 'person'—the presence of the human creature revealed this crying need to her, and she took the origin of the need on trust.

'I have myself,' she observed, 'an hour all of my own in the afternoon. I asked and was given it before I ever came, and meant to find somebody to walk with me. Will you let me have Muriel—will you let her come and fetch me? It is just what I wanted since I saw her that night, to make her acquaintance properly.'

Mrs. Grayling looked at her dumbly, swallowing still.

'I have often looked after little girls,' Harrie added, after waiting.

Even then she struggled for some minutes. 'I had not meant to ask it,' she said.

'Just till the concert is over, at least,' said Harrie. 'I am sure you have business. Do you think,' she added gently, 'her father would mind?'

'I shall not tell him,' said the woman desperately. 'Anyhow, he could not mind for an hour. You won't let her be—silly with you? Very well.'

And she went her ways, taking no farewell, offering no thanks, and clutching the plush jacket across her thin chest.

Little Miss Clench, at once puzzled and shocked, was left sitting in the pretty drawing-room, conning her newest problem.

'Well,' said Mr. Escreet at lunch, 'and what was the damage?'

Harrie told them about the concert, giving heed to her words. It was the habit of the Escreet household to allude even to your dearest interests with amused indifference, and she was trying to master the manner of their conversation.

'And did you promise my wife's assistance?' said Mr. Escreet jocularly.

'I think I gave it to understand that she would,' said Harrie.

They gazed at her blankly, from either end of the table; and then the husband laughed again.

'Well, Win, you're in for it,' he said, leaning back to wipe his mouth. 'The parish-room piano, I presume. I'll pay my threepence to come and hear.'

'I am sorry,' said Harrie, rather dismayed. 'I thought you would always have done it for them, perhaps.'

This made things no better. 'I can still refuse,' said Winifred coldly. 'It only wastes a little time. No doubt Mrs. Grayling made it seem as if I had always done it.'

'I thought for certain you were interested in the Restoration,' said Harrie.

'They are going to restore to its pristine vulgarity the decoration their ancestors had the taste to cover up,' said Gervase; but he answered at random without conviction, watching Winifred.

'The tenpenny restoration,' she exclaimed. 'A thing she knows we have both discouraged from the outset. No, really, Gervase; she is an extraordinary woman.'

'It must be her own thought,' said Gervase. 'She and the curate between them. Grayling would never have done it.'

'She must know I have refused for years, even at the Champions'. And trotting up in the plush coat to ask me—I have a mind, Gervase, to refuse for Rosie too. Her style is really above such nonsense.

Let the curate sing to them, he knows it's a part of his duties. You did not hear of anyone else?' She turned to Harrie.

'Helping, do you mean? She spoke of Fräulein Lindt, who is willing to play.'

'That's the governess,' said Winifred to Gervase. 'Oh no, dear, it's clear I can't.'

'Perhaps you'd like to play the trombone for them, Harri-et,' said Gervase, peeling an orange with exquisite attention.

'I said I would accompany, if they wanted it,' said Miss Clench, with humorously lifted brows. She seemed to have done very completely the wrong thing this morning.

'Why not sing?' said Gervase. 'They like singing better. A Parisian chansonnette, now—one or two.' He jerked his orange-skin aside. 'A short skirt, and some little frills beneath it——'

'Don't be stupid, Gervase,' said his wife rather sharply. 'It's rather an annoying affair, to tell the truth. You had better take a note down this afternoon, Harriet, if you are going in that direction.'

Harrie did so; and then took the rapturous Muriel for a country walk. With her experience of school-girls, she knew well the signs of a 'grande passion' in a precocious child of twelve, and the extreme dry delicacy with which it must be treated. She laughed at Muriel a very little, but she was too healthy and simple to act the idol-governess long. She found that the child, very clever and emotional, as she had perceived at their first meeting, wanted chiefly to be listened to, without the parental hand

on her mouth at every third word. Earnest parents do not always remember that words have a value simply as words to children making the acquaintance of their language, quite apart from the meaning that learning and experience have attached to them. Words and tags of speech, smart cynical phrases, anything that was sounding and vigorous, heard, read, or invented, poured from Muriel, who was as sure as Jonah or Jeanne d'Arc that she had a mission to save the world. She was the surer her words were of value, that they so obviously had the power to hurt, anger, and alarm the people placed by fate for her direction. She had begun lately to have an inkling that she was a little savage—a little Satan—and the idea had its power of elation.

Harrie let the child romance and rhapsodize, argue and complain, until the physical fever in her naturally abated, and the stock of defiance ran out. A lack of breath aided the process, for there was a lively north-easterly breeze, and Miss Clench walked quickly. She chased Muriel, and was chased in return, till both were tired, and glad to walk and talk more quietly. She gathered from what Muriel had said, that the blunderer Fräulein Lindt, full of delicate instincts in things of moment, had already adopted the method of reason with some success; and she had the wisdom to talk to Muriel of Fräulein Lindt as a person whom she respected—whom she, Muriel's transitory goddess, loved. Long before they reached home they were talking mixed sense and nonsense in the way imaginative children prefer, and Muriel the savage was showing remarkable sanity. Harrie easily discovered a fact the child

thought she never allowed to be seen, her adoration—a kind of pitying worship—for her mother. For twelve years old, at its most satanic, is not a hard age to see through. Harrie left her with a jest at the Vicarage gate.

‘Have I been good?’ said Muriel, eager as any baby.

‘Very,’ laughed Harrie. ‘Walking’s made me feel so nice inside. We will do it again.’

‘To-morrow?’

‘Not to-morrow, for I’m to go to Oxford.’

‘Oh,’ said Muriel, with a scowl. ‘It’s a silly place—dashed silly.’

‘Do not dash it,’ said Harrie, ‘till I have made up my mind. I’ll tell you on Friday what I think. Shall I?’

‘Yes, dearest. Good-bye.’

‘Good-bye,’ said Harrie, taking the rough little hand. ‘Poor little collectable.’

But that was added internally, as she walked on up the road. By the time she reached Farover gate, Muriel was already at tea—boasting.

Gervase, who could never wait for his tea beyond four o’clock, had been enjoying an undisturbed hour of Winifred’s society. Usually they talked little at this sacred hour, but Gervase had a curious experience to relate: so really interesting, that his wife listened with only very slight interruption.

Mr. Escreet had been in Oxford the day before, and had been stopped by a man in the road. The man—a perfect ragamuffin he described him—was sketching in a corner of Brasenose Lane, as he and

a friend issued from the Camera. The friend, whose way diverged from his, was parting with him near the corner of the narrow way : but diverted to say, ' Look at this, Escreet,' in condescending allusion to the young man's sketch, which was a clever rendering of some details on St. Mary's. Gervase, having glanced, was just departing on his own account, when the youth addressed him by name.

' By name ? ' his wife ejaculated.

' He had caught it, of course. But he had evidently also heard it before.'

' How very odd,' said Winifred.

' Not so very,' he retorted. ' However, the youngster was not on to my literary reputation. Indeed, Winifred, in so far as regards myself, I was not of the smallest interest to him.'

Their glances collided, and as usual, mind followed eyes.

' Gervase—you never mean—you don't think it was the man ? '

' I don't think at all. I am practically sure of it. He was after her, as keen as a leopard on the trail. He was not unlike a leopard,' said Gervase.

' Handsome ? '

' Of course : handsome and insinuating. Aren't they always ? '

' Who is he ? '

' Morough, the name is : Irish I gather : respectable ' said Gervase, ' I should not surmise. I said to myself, " Winifred, oh my wife, we are going to be lugged into the plot of a second-rate romance. I only hope it costs as much as sixpence on a book-stall." '

‘ Did you give him our address ? ’

‘ No, my child : he knew it. He quite expected to be asked to dinner, and it was only with an effort I refrained. His shirt was really too unclean, and his tie ragged. He is staying at Abingdon, so he said.’

‘ Abingdon ? That’s nearer than Oxford. If he comes, what on earth are we to do ? ’

‘ Oh,’ said Gervase, ‘ leave her to manage it, I should say. She has the most experience. Give the little creature rope—she won’t hang herself.’

‘ How do you know that ? ’

‘ Well—her neck’s too pretty.’

Winifred was silent for a period. ‘ We dine with the Champions to-morrow night,’ she said.

‘ What’s that to do with it ? Oh, you mean—suppose he came then. Isn’t our secretary coming with us ? ’

‘ You know it’s impossible—to the Champions of all people. I never even proposed it.’

‘ Ha,’ said Gervase. ‘ You will have to clear yourself of collusion, with our dear Cousin Grace.’

‘ I shall not allude to it, unless she does. She knows the girl is here, through Tom.’

Not long afterwards ‘ the girl ’ came in, noticeably pretty and collected, the serenity of wide country places in her grey-blue eyes. She wore the very same white-winged hat of a year before, for Harriet did not change her best hat often. And what was more, the hat could still be counted upon to make its effect ; for though Winifred’s keen eye marked in full daylight the signs of time, Gervase admired it greatly.

Taking her tea with her inexpressibly dainty gesture, seated in a very large chair, she talked to them casually, and they answered at random, viewing her with new eyes. It was Harrie herself who reminded them of the plan to visit Oxford on the morrow ; which, though Gervase had originally proposed it, both had forgotten.

‘ Kismet,’ he said lightly to Winifred later. ‘ Well, it’s ten chances to one she will not meet him. I will get Ann and Rosaline to ask her to lunch, when I have shown her about sufficiently. One of them will take her to the train.’

‘ Yes, that will do,’ said Winifred, who did not want to go to Oxford, as it would only remind her of several calls she owed. ‘ That is quite a good notion. Ann is perfectly safe.’

VI

HARRIET'S impressions of Oxford were recorded later for Geoffrey Horn ; and since he never disclosed them, we cannot present them to the reader. She made little remark at the time, as Mr. Escreet, delighted to have her in his sole charge, trotted her round its more famous buildings, in and out, from point to point, patronising humorously the principal effects in turn.

' This is reckoned good,' was his favourite phrase, mock-modest in the Escreet fashion, but only just concealing infinite criticism in reserve. His manner would have discouraged ' raving ' in the average American-born female—but Miss Clench, it seemed, was not inclined to rave. She was indefatigable in following him, though his manner of guidance was eccentric, and often wasteful ; she studied the ' good ' things indicated very dutifully, and said a few approving things.

' It's not as hopeless as Versailles, anyway,' was one of the remarks she made, having taken a good draught of the tower-views from various points of Christchurch Meadow.

' How would you improve it ? ' said the artist at her side with curiosity.

' Oh,' said Harriet absently, ' that's not what I mean.'

‘What do you mean?’ Mr. Escreet pressed her.

‘Well—there’s some business in its beauty,’ she said, and laughed.

She seemed in good spirits, shut within her private little court of judgment: but she would not further explain, and they went off very soon to explore the chapels.

When it came to interiors, Mr. Escreet could conceal his knowledge less successfully; and in the schools and the libraries, spurred by her quick questions, he let her have it. Oddly enough it had never struck him before, and now only occurred to him gradually, that she was a clever girl. Cleverness, he informed Winifred afterwards, exhibits itself less in enlarging upon what you know, than in your manner of betraying what you do not know. Harriet did not know most things, in the matter of English history and archæology; but her method of informing herself impressed him more than Rosaline Maskery’s easy store of school-knowledge. ‘She bit the right way,’ said Gervase. ‘She has good little teeth, and likes the taste. Most people gulp without enjoyment—or chew the cud.’

At one-thirty, Mr. Escreet had to leave her, but he had adopted by then such a manner of admiring protection, that it was quite difficult for Harrie to get free of him.

‘Where do the Miss Maskerys live?’ she asked, stopping.

‘In a little house up the Iffley Road.’ He gave the number. ‘Can you discover it by yourself?’

‘Well, I suppose I can count,’ laughed Harriet.

'But the arrangement is, she's to meet me at a shop.'

'Ann? You have not seen Ann yet, have you?'

'Not Miss Ann. She's working, and wants the house to herself.' Gervase raised his brows, but Harriet was quite easy. 'She works a good deal, I understand. It's the other one is to meet me, and I know the place. I noticed it in passing.'

Mr. Escreet had unwillingly to admit that she was capable, and to let her go.

'You will be back to tea,' he cried in her wake.

'I'll see,' said Harriet cheerfully. She was an independent atom. Gervase looked after her pretty little figure, till it whisked round a corner and disappointed him.

Rosaline met Harriet in the mood in which a girl performs a somewhat tiresome social duty; that is, with a manner of unmeaning, overflowing liveliness. Miss Clench, to tell the truth, felt somewhat as she did, and would have been much happier alone, but she acted considerably better. She was quiet, at least, and not, like Miss Maskery, nervously intimate. It is hard to account for the impulse a girl has to let out her personal confidence upon a companion to whom she is completely indifferent, and whom she may never see again. Rosaline would have said that she had to talk about something during lunch-time; and having no interest whatever in Harriet's affairs, and having been snubbed all the morning by her busy sister, she very naturally dwelt upon her own.

She replied to Harrie's questions about Ann's

work very carelessly, and was soon mounted on her own tastes and grievances. She came, by sure but crooked ways, to Tom: natural enough, no doubt, since Tom had, for some months now, been all Rosaline's world, and all her dim and radiant future. His name edged in constantly, whatever subject they chanced to be upon; and Harriet, wondering greatly at her, still endeavoured to be sympathetic in response.

'Does she want me to know she's in love?' the Irish girl asked herself, marvelling, as the so-called impulsive and excitable nature will often do, at the careless exposing of these sanctuaries by the type so-called 'reserved.'

And, without doubt, Rosaline wanted her to know; that she was in love: that she was admired: that she was wanted at least by somebody: that she was not the rather over-dressed little 'odd woman' she appeared to be, in these latter years during which she had grown a secret burden to herself. It was quite pathetic, really; but Miss Clench was as yet young in life, and too strange to this (to her) foreign type to sympathise or even comprehend.

'Do you like Farover?' rattled Rosaline. 'Do you play tennis? Oh, what a waste! You'll excuse me, of course, but you know what I mean. Tom—Mr. Champion—says they are the best courts for miles round, and he ought to know.'

'Is he a great player?' said Harrie.

'Goodness, he's a "blue," didn't you know?' Harrie was entirely ignorant as to the value of that colour in the sporting world, but Miss Maskery did

not stay to explain. 'He and I were partners in the tournament last year at Risings—such a sweet little brooch I had. Mr. Escreet is very good too—you mean you don't play at all?'

'I've played now and then,' explained Harrie, 'on a mud court with tape pinned down for the lines.'

'Where was that? In France?—never! They really *are*, aren't they?'

'I should have said they were not,' said Harrie. 'However: when can I get a chance to see you at it?'

'Not till May,' said Rosaline. 'All the fun happens in May here: used to, that is.' She sighed.

'You've a pretty pin,' said Harrie, tactfully diverting.

'Tom gave me that. Naughty of him, wasn't it? But he pretended it was a philopena-forfeit. Double almonds, you know.'

'I know there is a game,' said Harrie. 'We did it with the babies in my school.'

'Oh, yes,' said Rosaline. 'School, was it, where you were? You know Paris, don't you? Goodness, I wish I was you.'

This popular view of Paris amused Harriet, and she smiled.

'What's the joke? I mean it, I can tell you. I'd give anything to travel and see things. Mrs. Escreet says I ought to go to Germany to study properly; only Tom, who's been there, says it's beastly.'

'Are you going to sing at the concert?' said Harrie.

‘ Oh, you have heard of that business, have you ? ’ said Rosaline. ‘ Horrid bore, but what with Auntie bothering, I dare say I shall have to. I would do it to save Mrs. Escreet, anyhow. She’s so splendid, and patient with those dull people. Isn’t she a dear ? ’

There seemed to be some real enthusiasm, and Harrie replied to it ; but she was not long saved from Tom. Tom came in again on the subject of the concert ; for if Rosaline would sing, he had promised to recite.

‘ Comic, you know,’ said Rosaline. ‘ He can’t do anything well, he says, but play the fool.’

‘ Isn’t he clever ? ’ said Harriet. ‘ I thought he would be that, educated as he’s been.’

‘ My dear girl ! Do you mean Oxford ? Shows you have not had a long experience of it. There are heaps that are perfect donkeys—not that Tom’s one. He got a very good third, and he had all his athletics as well. What’s against Tom is really his brother—Eustace.’

‘ The boy at Eton ? ’ said Harrie.

‘ Oh, do you know them ? ’ A rather close stare, in the course of which Miss Maskery seemed to remember. ‘ You were to have gone to Risings, weren’t you ?—and then something happened. Er, well—Eustace is too absurd. He gets everything, one of those boys. He’d be up at college now, if it wasn’t for his age. He’s only sixteen. Of course, all that is hard on Tom.’

‘ Perhaps it would be,’ said Harrie gravely. ‘ But isn’t he proud of his brother ? ’

‘ Proud of Eustace ? Oh, I don’t know. Men are

not like that in England, you know. I mean, they don't show their feelings.' After an interval Miss Maskery said, 'Tom's not jealous, anyhow.'

'Well, I suppose he has the estate,' said Miss Clench, in her comical little manner of business.

'Oh, he will have Risings, of course, when his father dies.' Here Rosaline's tone took on carelessness. 'It's an enormous place, Risings. You have not seen it?'

'You'd like to get there, wouldn't you?' said Harrie. 'So Mrs. Escreet said.' It may be her deep-seated mischief had formed the phrase; in any case it annoyed Rosaline.

'Oh, I could do without it,' she said haughtily. 'The Champion children are such dull little things; anyone could look after them.'

Rosaline let her companion pay for the lunch, with the ease of a spoilt girl to whom money was important. After lunch the pair walked about aimlessly a little, and parted without regret.

'You'll catch the 3.20, I suppose,' said Rosaline. 'Shall I show you the way to the station?'

'No, indeed, I can find it.' Harriet considered, her eyes fixed down the High Street with a slightly amused expression. None could have guessed, seeing that look, that an empty purse was in her mind.

'It's cold and windy, of course,' she murmured, as though debating. 'What way would you go if you walked?'

'*Walked?* To Stackfield? To-night?'

'Isn't it the thing,' said Harrie, 'to walk alone?'

'Naturally you can if you like it,' said Rosaline, with recovered indifference. 'But it's miles.'

'How many miles : and where do they go ?'

'You can follow the river, of course—but that's longer. You would go to Radley, I suppose, and then get a short cut. Look here,' said Rosaline, remembering her position as hostess, 'will you have my bicycle ?'

'It's kind of you,' said Harrie, 'but I love to be on my feet. Besides, the little roads here are so lovely. Radley I am to remember, is it ? Well, good-bye.'

She had the ease of the born wanderer, attending in apparent distraction to Miss Maskery's further directions. She was to 'take a tram all the way,' make this bend and that, storm and capture Kennington and Radley—and then she would find a little road. It was this little road, it appeared, that was to be the real attraction of the afternoon. Harrie's Irish eyes danced at the thought of it.

'You will be late for tea,' was Rosaline's final warning, 'and Mrs. Escreet does not like it.'

'They won't mind for once,' said Harriet.

Rosaline remembered her awakened look, as of some secret joy, afterwards, when circumstances drove her to recur to this innocent conversation.

It was in the 'little road' that Harriet met Pat.

How it was that—granted she was fated to meet him—she could have met him nowhere else, I appeal to solely Irish authorities to decide. It was absolutely the first point on the homeward way where

poetry and romance arose together from the ground, and so Kathleen's son had chosen it for his appearing.

The cold English March holds—had we the courage to observe it—some of the most hopelessly exquisite moments of the year. It is the mistrustful month, to be sure, blighting its own buds, yet unable quite to refrain from attending to the song of the breaking spring. Its fairy hour is between four and five, the hour that is most ordinary in August. This was not a beautiful evening, this of Miss Clench's walk, for the sky was grey and colourless, the horizon on all sides empty of interest, and promising even in the west no reviving warmth of sunset. The new life in grass-blade and budding leaf seemed to shrink and huddle back under a whistling easterly breeze. Only at moments, at sheltered corners, the ineffable unquenchable scents of spring seemed to come to the watcher cunningly, as though in delicate mockery of this chance evening of cold; and once, when Harrie stopped under cover of the woods by Kennington, a thrush was doing duty for a nightingale nobly in a tree above the road.

Round the first turn of the lane Patrick was sitting by the wayside, with a sprig of blackthorn in his hat. He was turned half away from her, his clear profile—sharpened since she had seen it—distinct upon the background of indeterminate brown and blue. His hands were clasped about his knees, and his neck bent, a figure of perfect melancholy, mistrusting all, like the month of March. When he saw her, he did not rise, though his sad face altered charmingly. He threw his arms wide, with

the gesture of welcome of a child to its natural protector.

‘She’s come,’ he cried, ‘and I was asking the spring to send her. It is badly I must have caught the answer then, for I thought all the world was repeating—“Not yet.”’

The girl had stopped short in the road, her hand clutched to her side, her chin back, as once when Geoffry Horn had surprised her alone in the French woods.

‘Patrick,’ she cried in low reproach. ‘And not to warn me. Indeed this is not well done.’

‘Come on,’ he returned cajoling. ‘Come closer to me, little thing, and I’ll explain.’

‘I cannot,’ she cried again. ‘I do not trust you. Oh, one day between you you will break my heart.’

At her tone the young man, half-kneeling as he was in the attitude of careless grace, got slowly to his feet, knocking the dust from his soft hat.

‘I alarmed you,’ he said, as though speaking to himself. ‘I humbly ask your pardon, Harrie. I thought the man Escreet would have told you I was there. I waited to hear from you, I did indeed. But wanting a word from you all day, how could I help coming near you to-night, to watch the road you might be treading? How could I help it, Harrie?’

‘Why not have gone to the house and seen them?’ She still reproached him. ‘The gentlemen here do not do such things.’

‘Would you have liked that better?’ the boy said, puzzled. ‘But yourself was not there.’

‘And how did you know that?’ she returned.

'How did I?' he repeated eagerly. 'How did I? Is it the first time I have vexed you, because I knew where you would be?'

He was close to her now, and had caught her with his hands.

'It's yourself I want,' he cried, 'and how would I weary myself for others? Am I not to have one kiss, Harrie, after this mighty separation?'

She gave it him. With his blue eyes looking clear as a child's into hers, she could not do otherwise. Further than that, pity had seized her, he looked so changed, so haggard, in the grey evening light.

'Oh, my dear,' she said, in the sweetest of her tones, 'and you have been ill.'

'Do I look it?' he answered lightly. 'That is ill-done of me, darling, when you are there.'

'Was it for that you left the school?'

'For that,' said Patrick, 'and other things.' He looked restless—a trifle guilty—that look of a delinquent dog that she knew so well in Brian.

'Are they not satisfied? What have you been doing to them? Can you not go back?' Her quick, anxious questions were heaped upon him, as he held her by the arms. His craftsman's hands were more delicate than Brian's, but quite as strong; she remembered well that touch again, for he had held her so before.

Patrick dwelt upon her face with its changing expressions of trouble hungrily, almost curiously. 'How will I go back if I am not better after the holidays,' he said, teasing her. 'I cannot think I will be better, at this moment.'

'It is not the holidays yet,' she said.

'In a week's time it will be ; in April. Then will be the time for us.' His soft eyes poured love upon her : a dog's love and little more, she was sure of it.

'Why did you come to Oxford ?' she persisted, striving against the charm she found in every word.

'Why, but to make my holidays beautiful ? You never told me not to come.'

'You never gave me time.' She laughed hopelessly. 'Not that I'd have done it.' She clasped his arm in return. 'You thin boy,' she said. 'What are you doing for yourself, now, tell me that.'

'The doctor's given me a physic,' said Patrick, looking down. 'Talk to me of better things.'

'It's what I must know. Where does he live, this doctor ?'

Patrick turned his eyes on her slyly. 'In no street that matters,' he said. 'There's a beautiful one close by. That's the one we shall take, when you come with me.'

'You mean I am not to talk of it.' The Clench in her followed instantly. 'Patrick,' she said imploring, 'you are not inventing this altogether ?'

'I'll say this,' said Pat, getting visibly happier, 'it is more for you than the doctor I came. You're the doctor for me, you bit of a bright-eyed thing. It's well I'll be soon in your company.'

Thus freed from the distasteful shadow, whether of his illness or his deception, he branched to other and brighter things. They talked long and intimately, strolling slowly arm-in-arm down the little road among the woods, for she could not thrust him from her at once, though she knew she should be at

Farover. She heard of his work, his ups and downs of interest in it, and despair ; the petty jealousies and interferences of the school staff, some of which he had managed to escape by living outside the precincts. It had been his own choice, Harrie gathered, to live alone, though he had been offered first a resident post, and he tried to persuade her that it did not ' come expensive.'

Other facts she learnt were that the headmaster's daughters were ' fine girls,' and he gave them private lessons : that he had ' a lot of holidays,' and seemed to be often in London. Further, ' Mr. Wynne was a good man,' Pat said of his employer-in-chief : his virtue proving to consist in praising some drawings he had done him. Pat had helped in the designs for some new buildings, and Harriet thought she perceived how the good Mr. Wynne had got as much as possible out of the young artist attached to his staff, for no extra remuneration. She imagined the master must needs feel a little indebted or shamed, to let Morough go so easily before the term was fully finished, with little or no explanation or excuse.

' He has written once after me to enquire,' said Pat of his good man, ' and to send some money to me.'

' Money he owed,' asked Harriet, ' or in advance ?'

' In advance, may be.' Pat looked rather sulky for a minute. ' He'll have the worth of it some time, when I work for him again.'

This showed the girl clearly his true feeling towards his employer. From one of his own kind he would have taken the advance in the spirit of a

gift, and gladly. Here was money actually, that Pat Morough was trusting to repay !

‘Have you heard from Mr. Horn?’ said Harrie, as though directly on the thought. Patrick had not heard; he had a notion he might have missed a letter with a scolding, through coming so quickly away. Horn had his address at Bluffborough, of course, being acquainted with the man Wynne; but ‘down there,’ as Pat said guilelessly, ‘they would hardly know where he had gone.’

‘Then this Oxford doctor is not Mr. Wynne’s advice,’ said Harrie at once.

He was not: Patrick himself had found him, as a man suiting his private taste and need. Glancing sidelong at his face, she found her vagabond cousin smiling broadly.

‘You to have suspicions of me,’ he crowed. ‘For you have, and indeed who better reason?’

‘Well,’ Harrie defended herself. ‘How can I ever know what to think?’

‘Think what you wish,’ he insinuated, ‘and that’ll be the best.’

‘I cannot want you ill, as you know,’ she said.

‘Then wish it was for none but you I came,’ returned Pat. ‘Wish that I’m loving you entirely.’

‘You’re hopeless,’ said Harrie, sighing. ‘I’ll not wish it yet, so I tell you. What I wish is for you, now and for ever, to keep your engagements.’

‘Well, I’ll do that,’ he assented, after a space of watching her under the shade of his drooping lashes. ‘Engage me to come home with you now, and I’ll keep it truly.’

‘No,’ the girl said quickly. ‘They’re going out.’

'Why, that's the more reason. Can I not have supper with you?'

'You can not,' returned his cousin. 'Have you learnt so little of English ways as to propose it? You don't know how they would think of you, in that grand house—or of me, either.'

She argued as with a young child, for his aspect was protesting. He looked tired too, and curiously pale in the twilight—the mere ghost of a merry Irish tramp at her side. Twilight it could be called, for they were now approaching Farover, for all their slow walking, and the trees were thickening above them on the lonely road.

'You mean I may not come,' he murmured, 'and you to be alone all the evening. Where am I to go then?—tell me that.'

'You must go away. You must go home.' It might really have been to a lost dog, gaunt with sad eyes, that she was speaking. And the dog would have shown as much comprehension.

'I will tell them of you, Pat,' she promised. 'I will do it at once. You will get asked there surely, to have dinner or tea. They have been kind, and they will let me see you.'

In her heart, though, she did not think they would. Thinking of Gervase and of him alternately, and of the undelivered message, she wished her heart did not hurt her so.

'How long will it be,' he said, 'for waiting? As long as last time?'

For a moment she stood fighting the most troublesome emotion, for his tone had pierced her through. He saw it, or felt, for he leapt forward in the road.

‘ Indeed, Harrie, I should not have said it. It’s kneeling at your feet I should be, before my tongue should reproach you. Do not remember it, my darling—my mother’s son has not grown to that.’

His arms were about her, though he did not kiss her again.

‘ I will come to you,’ she said brokenly. ‘ But I trust you not to come.’

‘ The first half’s all I need,’ he said. ‘ You’ll promise, mavourneen ? ’

They stood, holding by both hands a moment ; and then she drew hers from his clasp, and turned. Chimneys among the foliage, and a warm hearth were before her ; but he was left in the bleak spring world, and the short day dying from the open sky beyond the trees.

VII

WINIFRED ESCREET called Harrie to her room, where she was dressing under the light of all the candles, and looked at her curiously when she came there. She told Hester, who was in the room, that she could go.

'You look tired,' she said with mechanical kindness.

'I walked home,' said Harrie. 'I met a friend.' In the disturbance of her thoughts she blurted like a schoolgirl. Winifred instantly turned frosty.

'Ah,' she said, 'and who was that?'

'Patrick Morough. He said Mr. Escreet had seen him.'

'Ah, yes,' said Winifred, colder from shyness of the subject. 'What is he, I forget?'

'My father's sister's son,' said Harrie. 'A poor boy: a drawing-master in a school.'

'What school?'

'Mr. Wynne's, at Bluffborough, near London.'

'I seem to have heard of it,' said Mrs. Escreet. She devoted herself to the arrangement of shaded roses among her ancient lace. 'You want to see this Mr. Morough,' she said.

'Since he's my cousin,' said Harriet. Throughout the dialogue she was blunt, but not rude. Her voice and accent saved her, even in extreme excitement

as at present. Mrs. Escreet felt the excitement, being vexed by it as something foreign to the air of Farover, and faintly suspicious of it too.

'I suppose you have got his address at Abingdon?' she said.

'I have,' said Harrie. 'Why?'

'It would be kind of you to stitch me here,' said Winifred, feeling a seam of her satin train absently. 'Hester has forgotten the hook.' When she had got the girl behind her, she proceeded.

'Why I want the address? I must make enquiries naturally. I mean, before I invite him to the house.'

'If you make enquiries, you will never have him invited,' said Harrie, kneeling on the floor, her quick fingers diligent.

'Why?' said Winifred.

'Because it shows you suspect him, and that he would not bear. Can you not take my father's nephew on trust, and you a friend?'

Again, she was direct rather than rude, but her patroness before the glass flushed angrily.

'Your father's own dealings were not always impeccable,' she said. Her veiled antagonism to the girl began to assert itself. Harrie winced, still kneeling as she was to fasten the beautiful satin robe.

'And you have no trust in me either?' she said, throwing the glossy folds from her with a movement full of power and art, so that they lay straightway in the right lines on the floor. Winifred, pleased with the effect, resumed her manner of still reason.

‘ Well, what can I think, Harriet, when I give you one hour after lunch-time and you stay out more than three ? ’

‘ Are you angry at that ? Have you been needing me ? Of course I had the morning.’ The girl seemed to feel the weight of her rebuke at once, which was some satisfaction. Gervase also had had the morning away from her, and had enjoyed it a little too much. Winifred had not quite recovered from her annoyance at his enthusiasm.

‘ My husband has fixed the last guest for our dinner in April,’ she said, ‘ and the cards should be written at once. I have left the list on the bureau downstairs.’

‘ I’ll do it,’ said Harrie. ‘ That looks very well.’ She alluded to Mrs. Escreet’s gown, and in spite of herself, the lady inside the gown felt flattered. Miss Clench’s standard in dress, she had had reason to feel once or twice, was as pitiless as her own. After a pause the girl proceeded, concealing the effort it cost her, though glancing nervously at Winifred’s face.

‘ I had to ask you another thing,’ she said. ‘ You’ll not mind paying me by the month ? ’

Winifred stopped in all her glory, overcome by surprise.

‘ I am right to ask you about it and not him ? ’ said Harriet. ‘ I know till now we have not spoken of money.’

‘ Do you need money ? ’ Winifred’s voice was sharper than she meant, for she had a new suspicion. In conjunction with meeting her ‘ friend ’ so recently, the request was odd.

'I've little in my purse,' said the girl simply. She had been just four weeks in the house, and it had occurred to nobody she was in need. The day's outing had exactly exhausted her little reserve, for she had spent all her big savings on the journey.

Mrs. Escreet, still not knowing what to think, and annoyed at her own state of indecision, said : 'Come to me to-morrow morning in the study, and we'll settle it.' With which the girl, faintly thanking her, had to be content. After all, she reflected, how could any occupant of Farover know the significance of an empty purse, the teasing train of thought it aroused in the brain of its possessor? From the stable-boy to Mr. Escreet, theirs were empty but to be refilled. They were the happy people !

'You won't be lonely?' Winifred asked her in the hall at parting, with recovered good-humour. A letter in a masculine hand was lying on the oak table, where it had waited all day.

'No,' said Harriet, laying a hand on the letter. 'You'll not mind it if I play a little, will you?'

'Goodness no. Amuse yourself. Come, Gervase.'

Gervase advanced, admirably attired, the picture of confident charm.

'We leave the house in your charge, Miss Harriet,' he said. 'Like the girl in the story, you are to let nobody in, whatever they may come selling.'

'Just what she will do, probably,' said Winifred in the carriage. She confided a good deal to Gervase during the drive. Neither of them had ever heard of a sister of the conqueror Clench; and they had in consequence to consider the cousin well-invented.

Harriet kept Geoffry's letter as a treat till after dinner. The cook gave her a beautiful little meal, which revived her spirits slightly. Afterwards, telling Hester it was what she liked, she sat in the dark for a period in the drawing-room, thinking and enjoying her situation, for it was like old times to be alone.

Hester, when she brought the rose-shaded lamp, observed that it was raining.

'I heard it,' said Harriet absently. 'I hope Mrs. Escreet's satin'll not get wet.' Hester retired, smiling as usual. The prudent instinct shown in the remark her own northern frugality approved; only it was odd applied to Mrs. Escreet, who had half a dozen other dresses, and was wearing a comparatively old one.

'Will you have the piano-candles, Miss Harriet?' she enquired before she went.

'No, no,' said Harriet. 'I shall like the dark.'

Then, when Hester was gone, she read Geoffry's letter. She began it happily enough, curled up in her sofa-corner, but it grew terribly disturbing. She hardly grasped all its news at once, the emotion of the first item stirred her whole being so much.

There had been a letter from Brian! It had dawned, that white shape so much wished-for, and vanished into the night. What had happened to it Geoffry could not say. He had had—it was like him—the idea of going to Versailles, on the private detective work of tracking her correspondence. He had armed himself with all kinds of authority from the consuls, with 'some' of whom he was acquainted. He assured her he had enjoyed

a visit to the gardens by the way, but Harrie saw clearly that he had taken much trouble in her cause. There was nothing for her at the post-office ; but having sufficiently teased the employés, Geoffry discovered that there had been a letter with American postmarks, which had been sent on to the Barrières. Mr. Horn had proceeded to that familiar haunt, and had interviewed a disaffected servant—probably a new one since Miss Clench's time. The girl remembered a letter with some trouble, and thought Madame had opened it ; she knew no more, or else did not want to say. Geoffry left the enquiry at that point to his correspondent—only suggesting that the envelope might have had money, which showed a startling knowledge of Madame Barrière.

There remained a little more news in the letter, but the girl threw it aside and went to the piano. Her emotions were breaking her, and she must sing. Rarely, in private with Fräulein Lindt, she had so relieved herself, letting loose the voice that was being kept for Brian. It was her secret, her best and dearest, and whatever went wrong between them, as things seemed fated to go wrong, with this voice she could at least call to him.

She sang without tears, for her suffering to-night was too deep-seated for that. Her voice, during the interval since she had last interviewed it, had improved. It was broader and deeper, and it seemed to fill her throat and knock against her lips. She would not open her lips very wide, singing in the 'little voice' that was fit for a small room. But the little voice was very pure and penetrating ; and

Marion, Hester and John, at supper in the kitchen, heard it and opened the door.

'There you are,' said Hester, as though in demonstration of something already obvious. 'She would beat 'em all, master and mistress *not* excepted, if she would only let herself out.'

'Why doesn't she?' said John with respect.

'Because,' said Hester severely, 'she's been kept too low.'

After an interval of eating and attending—'It's a pity she's there,' said the soft-hearted cook, 'and nobody to see or hear her.'

There was somebody to hear, as it happened, and that a listener entranced. He leant against the house-wall in the rain, having crept round into the garden, near where shafts of light from the drawing-room lay out upon the lawn. He was a stray dog, come begging again because he could not keep away. He listened now with shut eyes and lips, the tears and the raindrops on his face. Patrick's passion grew no deeper, because of that treasure of sound he found in his beloved—he would have said he expected it, no doubt, though he had only heard her croon a little on the bridge. She had told him not to come, he could not imagine why; but, forbidden or not, he had been drawn along the roads again, through the cold drizzle, to the spots he knew she haunted.

Harrie sang on, little thinking that she sang to him: that the invocation of Brian Clench had drawn a thin, sad shade of his conquering presence near to her. She sang a few of her mother's songs,

of which the memory lingered, fragments of the fervent operatic practice which Brian had instituted and inspired ; she sang—a trifle incorrectly, as her cousin noted with a smile—some Irish ballads with which ‘ himself ’ had probably amused her childhood ; and she sang finally the Orpheus scena, which she had evidently studied in the score, for she had it all correctly and by heart.

‘ What will I do without her ? ’ groaned Morough, in echo of her latest song, and limped round to the front of the house.

If he wished to attack her stronghold, he had better have gone to the back entrance, where the kind kitchen population would at least have had pity for him. Young, tired, ragged and wet as he was, he might have appealed to them ; and handsome enough, for all his disarray, to have melted harder hearts than those of Hester or of Marion. But, calling on his lady, Patrick went to the front door ; and Hester, after a passage of chaff with John, went to open in her best manner—which was stony.

She came to the drawing-room after an interval, still preserving her stiffest public demeanour. ‘ Mr. Morrow,’ she said, ‘ and would Miss Clench see him a minute ? ’

‘ No, Miss Clench would not.’ A little indignant head jerked up from among the corner cushions of the sofa, where it seemed Miss Clench had been crying, after the effort of her concert.

Hester went back ; then, with clear unwillingness, presented herself again. It seemed, Mr. Morrow had a letter from Miss Clench’s father, which he was longing to hand her in person.

'And that's unworthy of him,' cried Harriet. 'You can tell him I said so, if you like.'

After some more short parleying, the front door closed with a click of neat severity, and Harrie, who had been listening to Hester's now retreating footsteps with her head back and set lips, relaxed the tension of her brow. She remained rather pale and as though wondering at herself.

'I've turned him out in the rain,' she said to nobody, 'and he is Kathleen's son.' There might have been any sentiment in her tone, from triumph to utter despair.

Hester, coming in much later, found her curled up among the cushions, with Geoffry's letter open on her knee. She looked tired to death, and the little vertical line that should hardly be visible under twenty years haunted her brow. She had read the letter to the end, and found it contained a word or two of Patrick.

The statement was simple enough, though it needed an effort, in her rather dazed state, to take in its whole purport. Patrick's illness was genuine and serious, and he was in debt to others besides the doctors, at Bluffborough and in London. Those were the facts, and it was not wonderful that, being what they were, he had confessed them to Horn rather than to Harrie. He had plainly considered his illness at least was no affair of hers. He had not even begged of her, though he had been begging again of Geoffry. Harrie, though she might lend him money to help his art, must not soil her fingers with so ugly a business as physical disease.

It was all simple—and collectable extremely ; only it was so heart-breaking too.

Mr. Horn desired to send him aid, but knew neither the boy's present whereabouts, nor the names of his debtors. Writing to Mr. Wynne and to Harrie was his only resource, and he had heard nothing from the headmaster.

' I would send him a blank cheque,' wrote Geoffry in desperation evidently equal to hers, ' if I thought he was anywhere near you ; but I do not even know that.'

This was what Harriet was pondering when the parlourmaid came in.

' You have no letters for the post, miss ? ' she said.

' No, no,' the girl said wearily. ' There's nothing I can do to-night.'

' You are in trouble, Miss Harriet,' said Hester in a sane, quiet tone, as she knelt to brush some errant ashes under the fire. It may be mentioned, Hester had told the kitchen nothing of the young man at the door. She was only thankful she had disturbed herself to answer that bell, instead of John.

' I am,' said Harrie simply. ' I want advice.'

' You'd not be going to the clergyman,' said Hester thoughtfully, leaning a hand on the grate, and looking in the fire. ' Mrs. Grayling, now, she's kind.'

' I fear I can hardly tell her,' said the girl. Hester recurred to the fire again, as though consulting it ; she had not, it was noticeable, mentioned her own master and mistress.

'If it's a woman you want,' said Hester, 'there's Miss Ann.'

'Ann Maskery?' The girl on the sofa stirred. 'I do not know her at all, Hester; what of her?'

'She's got sense, for a young lady,' said Hester, with due moderation.

'Do you know her, then?' said Harrie.

Hester smiled a trifle. 'Not to say know, miss. She came up canvassing Mrs. Odgers, the daily char, catching her here more easily than at home. She canvassed Marion too—not that Marion is any good to her; but it's just duty, with Miss Ann. She said she'd educate Marion, against she marries, and you should have seen Mrs. Odgers shake, for well she knows she manages the opinions of hers.'

'Did she not canvass you against you marry, Hester?'

'No, miss, she did not; well knowing my politics fixed.' Hester came of staunch Liberal yeoman stock in a Northern county; Harrie of course knew nothing of these things.

'I hardly know,' she said, 'where I should get at Miss Maskery. I missed her at Oxford to-day.'

'You must catch her flying,' said Hester. 'She's here, there and everywhere on her bicycle. But Mrs. Odgers did mention, she was coming soon for a round.'

'I will catch her flying,' said Harriet, rousing to life a trifle. 'Does she go at all to Abingdon, Hester, do you know?'

'To be sure she does, and stays there very often.'

She has friends everywhere in the district, Miss Ann.'

Harriet went to bed before the Escreets returned. She had to admit a headache, but she was a little lighter in mind. She thanked heaven and Hester for a new suggestion.

VIII

NEXT morning Miss Clench's anxieties were further lightened by receiving two gold sovereigns from Winifred. She stored these up in a little leather bag, as pleased as though she had made a fortune. She looked, as Winifred might have noticed, younger at once.

'The secretary is singing under the window,' said Gervase, peering out of the side-bow of the drawing-room. 'Life is evidently not as flat as usual. Anyhow her notes are not.'

'She has a voice of sorts,' Mrs. Escreet admitted. The pair were in the drawing-room, in grave conference over some patterns of brocade; for even in the house, Winifred liked his opinion on everything planned or ordered.

'Call her up and make her show it,' said Gervase, who was idle. As Winifred, less idle, lingered in spectacles over the fat pattern-books, he opened the piano and struck a note.

'Sing a scale, Harri-et,' he called. 'Up you go.'

The voice in the garden, after a short pause, went up obediently; but lightly, a mere breath, and she laughed at the end.

'Come along here to my wife,' called Gervase again. 'She feels a mission to teach you.'

'Do be quiet, Gervase,' said Mrs. Escreet, as

the girl appeared, her hands full of the flowers she had been collecting for the vases. 'Harriet is busy, and so am I.'

'No time for missions to-day,' said Mr. Escreet, shutting the piano. 'The missus is dressing the chairs. Thank you, Harriet, that will do.'

'Of course I will give her lessons if she likes,' said Winifred, half-turning to the window. 'You have never had any, I suppose.'

'Never one,' said Harriet, very definitely; 'and I cannot have them yet.'

'If you are eighteen,' said Winifred, 'it is fully time.'

'It would be, I dare say,' said the girl. 'Aren't these red anemones lovely?' She went on her way with her treasures.

'Didn't catch her that time,' said Gervase. 'You don't catch our secretary-bird easily. It's a pretty little pipe, though, in its way.'

As his wife said nothing, they plunged into brocades again.

It was some days later that, armed with her sovereigns changed into postal orders, Harrie caught Ann Maskery 'flying.' She had no news at all of Patrick in the interval, and teased herself wondering what had become of him; for to go herself to his address was out of the question, and the card she sent to him explaining this remained unanswered. She knew that Mrs. Escreet had sent a messenger to the country town, but nothing was disclosed to her of the result, and neither pride nor prudence would let her question the servants.

As for attacking Winifred again, she found she could not face it, at least immediately ; all she knew—and, indeed, it was sufficient to know it—was, that no further word was breathed at Farover concerning an invitation to her cousin.

The flying Ann was hard to catch ; but one afternoon, returning from a walk with Muriel, Miss Clench came upon her at the Vicarage gate. She had halted there for a brief rest, and was now clearly preparing to spread her wings anew. She was trimly clad in grey homespun ; but further than this, the less said of Ann's appearance the better, for she was very plain.

'How d'ye do,' said Ann agreeably, removing the foot she had planted on the pedal. 'Well, Muriel, I must say you are a nice person, not even to shake hands.' Muriel shrugged, and walked into the Vicarage, kicking open the gate. 'Cross,' commented Ann. 'She can be quite a nice kid when she likes, but this is a bad day. You're on your way back to Farover, I suppose.'

'And you?' returned Miss Clench in foreign style.

'I am going on.' The 'on,' as pronounced with a gesture, was expressive. It meant that Ann, primed with instructive leaflets, was making a circuit of her scattered flock.

'Could you allow me a minute before you go there?' said Miss Clench, with comically lifted brows.

'Oh, dear, yes,' said Ann, rising to any call with a prompt geniality that seemed professional. 'We'll talk by the pig-stye ; the wind's the other way.'

No sooner proposed than accomplished. The Vicarage kitchen-garden, rather small and unkempt, abutted on the church, and being secured on two sides by the pig-stye and the high road, was protected from the house in the rear by a shrubbery of laurels. It thus afforded excellent cover for an intimate conversation, as Ann's diplomatic instinct had suggested. The political bicycle, bristling with leaflets, was leant against the outer wall, where it was safe to be undisturbed, being known as Miss Ann's throughout three parishes; and Harriet and her new acquaintance sat down within upon a rustic seat, which presented a perfect view of Stackfield church to the visitor's admiration.

'Frightful, isn't it?' said Ann. 'I often come here with Uncle Fred to dwell on it, on Sunday afternoons.'

'I didn't see your aunt to-day,' said Harriet, clasping her knees, on which the leather bag was lying. 'I hope she is well.'

'No, she isn't,' said Ann gravely; adding after a silence, 'Secret, of course.'

'I was afraid of it,' said Harrie. 'You know, it's in her face.'

'Very few people have seen it there,' said Ann. 'Anyone else would have given up long before, and she will have to knock under soon. She says I am not to tell Rosie until I must; which will be late, for she's the last person to discover. Oh, goodness me, the illness in the world.' She squared a fist as though she would have fought it.

'Muriel doesn't suspect,' said Harrie, having

learnt the few details there were to learn—for nothing is more simple than a fatal illness, unless its sequel, death.

‘Think not? I’m not so sure. Muriel’s a clever child. I told Aunt Amabel to-day it might account for some of her rages with Uncle Fred. Muriel’s got twice his brains, you know, and that’s a fact. Do you understand her?’

‘I’m beginning to,’ said Harrie. ‘I’ve an idea she’s simple, really.’

‘So she is,’ said Ann. ‘If I had ever had time, so to speak, to work Muriel out, I should have been glad to have a fling; but she needs all your time and will-power—no mistake.’

“And yours are wanted already,” said Harrie. ‘It would be awful of me to ask for a bit of them, wouldn’t it?’

‘No,’ said Ann, with a glance and a turn. ‘Only you’ll be very kind to be quick, for I’m promised on honour at Abingdon by five.’

‘That’s lucky, for it is the very place I want.’ She went on to tell Ann her difficulties, straight and simply, and Ann listened with interest, taking her in with pleasant clear eyes the while. She had, very vaguely, a look of her aunt, but her manner was far more bracing.

‘Why can’t you go yourself?’ she demanded. ‘Is he in love with you?’

‘That’s one thing,’ admitted Miss Clench.

‘Don’t you want to marry him?’ said Ann, pinning her as it were.

‘I cannot. I don’t feel to him that way, nor does he if he would believe it; and besides, he is ill.’

'Go on,' said Ann with a shrug.

'Well, I wrote and he sent me no reply. Maybe he has moved to Oxford, and in that case there may be debts.' She produced the postal orders, tidying them out with her little hands. 'It's horrid to tease you about it,' she said, looking up at Ann's square face, 'but you must take my word I would do it if I could.'

'Give me the address,' said Ann, and Harrie did so. 'Mrs. Blencow? Yes—Blencow's on my list, though he's shaky.'

'That's lovely, if you know them,' said Harrie with relief. 'It's only to ask her if she's been paid: and which are the tradesmen wanting money: and then, if he has gone from her as I think, where he is.'

Ann frowned a minute, her fists to her chin. 'What business is it of yours?' she broke out. 'You oughtn't to be paying. I suppose you know that hasn't a good look.'

'I should know that indeed,' said Harrie. 'The thing is, if I began now, would I ever have the time to explain?' She sent a suggestive glance up to the church clock.

'I've not the time to-night, that's true,' said Miss Maskery, rising. 'And besides, I don't need explanation. There's nothing dishonest about you, whatever other people may turn out.'

'Thank you,' said Harrie, and her soft eyes showed tears.

'I say,' said Ann in a burst, as they clasped hands, 'why don't you make a friend of Auntie? Have you an idea, the sort of things that are said

about you, up at the Champions', and here? Rosie has got hold of a pack of them, and thinks she's sharp in adding to them, but I told her not to repeat what she didn't really understand. Whatever else I am not,' said Ann, with her chin out, 'I'm her elder sister.'

'Did she get the things she heard from Mr. Tom?' said Harrie, with a patience the other girl noticed.

'Goodness, no.' Ann's face glowed. 'Tom's the one person who, since he saw you, won't believe a word of it. You would be safe with him. But that's not the point, as at best he's only a man. Here's Auntie, close at hand. Auntie's magnificent! And once persuaded, she'd work for you, that she would. In a very curious way, she manages even Uncle Fred.'

'It is hard for me,' said Harrie, 'not being of her church.'

'I forgot that,' admitted Ann, and paused. 'Oh, bother the time,' she said, stamping. 'Well, I like you anyhow; and, look here—we will meet again.'

She said the final sentences without the garden-door, and climbing on her bicycle.

'When you will,' said Harrie, 'but you're the busier.'

'I'll let you know,' shouted the once more flying Ann. 'Sorry it's so short—oh, dash that dog.'

So inspiring was the pig-stye interview, that Harrie was almost laughing as she walked on up the road to Farover. This type of English girl

she seemed to have heard of, and it did not seem so strange as Rosaline's.

She had to wait patiently before she had the chance of meeting Ann again. She had a line from her two days later—'Gone: left no address: I will see you soon,' enclosing a postal order for one-and-six, presumably the change from the two pounds; but she was not greatly affected by the news, for she had already misdoubted as much through looks and hints in other quarters. For any further information to guide her perplexed thoughts, or to help Geoffry Horn, she had to wait many days.

On one of the earlier Wednesdays of April, she chose a harmless moment to slip into the drawing-room, all sounds of singing-practice being over. She expected the trio she would find; and Rosaline Maskery was there sure enough; and sure enough, so was Tom, sitting on the low window-ledge, the spring sun catching his ruddy face. Winifred, who never left this pair alone, was still on her throne, the music-stool; and all three seemed to be discussing with some heat, as Harrie entered.

'I don't think somehow it's their style,' said Mr. Champion. 'It's awfully fine, of course, and all that, Cousin Win; but they do like the sort of thing they're used to.'

'Which is exactly how they never learn to like better things,' said Mrs. Escreet.

'A girl in a decline,' said Rosaline disdainfully, 'left deserted on a seashore, and a religious chorus

in waltz-time. Everyone knows what village people *like*.'

'A country-side song might be possible,' said Winifred. 'There are a few good ones in the best selections.'

'The women don't like it so well,' said Tom. 'What I mean is, it doesn't get *at* them.'

'Who wants to?' said Rosaline. 'Really, I have a great mind not to sing at all. It's too much trouble to suit everybody.'

'If you mean me,' said her teacher smoothly, 'you can sing what you like, my dear. Only I cannot teach it to you, for I never studied those things myself.'

'Does it need study?' said Tom. 'I should study the audience, and just let it roll out. You've only got to make 'em laugh, or wipe a tear. That is, I've got to do one, and Rosie the other.'

'I can't be sentimental,' said Rosaline. 'I'm not.'

'They'll do the sentiment,' Mr. Champion consoled her, 'if you plug out the stuff. Won't they, Miss Clench?' He was the first person to recognise her entrance.

'Can't I hear it anyway?' said Harrie. 'Then I'd know better how they'd feel.'

'You can't,' said Rosaline testily. 'For the simple reason that Mrs. Escreet hasn't a song of that kind in the house. I shan't sing, that's the simplest. Tom and the curate can plug out, as he calls it, on Saturday.' She walked to the tea-tray evidently annoyed.

'My trouble is, I know nothing of the listeners,' said Harrie. 'When is the concert fixed for?'

'April the twentieth,' answered both.

'The twentieth? Why'—she turned to Winifred—'isn't that your dinner-party?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Escreet, quietly turning the music. 'I never intended to go myself.'

She knew that Harriet knew how recently the date had been changed, and was not the better pleased for the knowledge. Luckily, the girl had the sense to say nothing, and only looked enquiringly at Tom, who was one of the favoured six to whom she had despatched cards.

'Mrs. Escreet will give me leave out after dinner,' the young man jovially explained, 'won't you, Cousin Win? You'll have to help me through, Miss Clench, if Rosie cuts, that's all.'

'Are *you* performing?' said Rosaline, turning on her almost rudely.

'I did say I would accompany—but Mrs. Grayling thought I might take supper at the Vicarage. When I accepted I had no idea,' said Harrie to her hostess in apology, 'that it would turn out the same night.'

'That will do very well,' said Mrs. Escreet. She also rose and came to the tea-table, while Mr. Champion stared at her.

'Oh, I say,' murmured Tom. He corrected the social mistake by adding, 'Well, Rosie, you'll have to relent.'

'Rosaline will sing for my guests, here,' said Mrs. Escreet, touching the girl's soft hair as she passed her. 'I had meant to engage you, my dear, so do not forget. We shall make a better audience, if a trifle more "*difficile*," with Dr. Gudgeon.'

Dr. Gudgeon was the greatest musical light of the neighbouring University, and it was Winifred's triumph, rather than that of her husband, to have induced him to come and shine upon this select gathering at Farover. Harrie, in writing his name on the dinner-card, had remembered vaguely having heard of him from Geoffry Horn. He was an eccentric of the most pronounced ; but his word, at least in musical matters, was law to the Escreets. It occurred now to Winifred's mind in its deliberate planning, to get his approval of her pupil Rosaline ; even, if she could make him write it, to add it to the girl's testimonials ; for Rosaline had none too many.

A little later they went into the garden, on which April was beginning to smile. All three women were rather flushed, and glad of the sweet air in their faces. Tom was tranquil, but his lips inclined to shape into a whistle. He had an idea that currents were moving under this mild chit-chat of the drawing-room, of which he knew nothing, and which he was very thankful to ignore.

Rosaline discussed music persistently with his cousin ; so he had no choice but to stroll behind, and talk to Miss Clench. Not that he minded that, for the girl was very good company. Harriet on her side was watching her chance to get a word with Ann's sister, but she was ready to pass the moments in friendly give-and-take with Mr. Champion, who grew, she discovered, on acquaintance.

Once launched in conversation, Harrie could not easily remain formal ; and, as a fact, they were

so lively that Mrs. Escreet in front remarked carelessly to Rosaline they were flirting. It was only when the foremost couple vanished down the steps of the Dutch garden, that Tom stopped quietly beside Miss Clench on the terrace, and changed his tone.

‘ You’ll excuse me,’ he said. ‘ Ann—Miss Maskery—gave me a message for you, if I could get it through. I didn’t suppose I should have an opportunity.’

Harrie turned on him, amazed and apprehensive.

‘ I know you’ll say it’s none of my business,’ said Tom, looking at her full and steadily ; ‘ but I intervened, as a friend, to save Ann. She’s awfully overworked and worried—my father’s business she’s about, don’t you know.’

‘ I couldn’t find anyone else,’ gasped Harrie ; the colour, rare in her face, had risen painfully. Tom, seeing the signal of shame and self-reproach, reflected her colour as he proceeded.

‘ I know it. It’s sickening you should have to do it either. I want to take it off her shoulders, but I must have your leave.’

‘ Has she told you then about it ? ’

‘ I must explain,’ said Tom, after a pause, ‘ that Ann and I are business partners. I work for my father too in the district, and we are used to sharing things. She does a sight too much always, but that’s the girl she is. I got this thing out of her on one of our rounds—because, of course, she knows I am on your side. It’s beastly cheek, Miss Clench,’ said Tom, with vigour, ‘ for me to say so. But since you know nothing of our pestilent habits, I’d better

mention that country people take sides in everything, whatever there is to discuss, from a novel to a mowing-machine.'

'I know I've been a subject,' said Harrie. 'Miss Maskery let me know that. Besides'—she crumpled the leaves of the laurel hedge nervously—'I know the feeling. I've been it before.'

'I bet you have,' thought Tom, looking her over with one keen glance. 'Well now, it's like this: Ann's got the brains, and I've got the legs—and the time. You talk to her all you want, and she'll give me orders. If it's paying bills, I'll pay 'em. If it's finding an address, I'll find it. Anyhow, I'll do my best to follow out directions; for on my honour, and you'll excuse me, it's not the work for a girl.'

He talked low and fast, for their time together was limited. The expression of his healthy face was grave, almost severe. Only his voice had a quiet cordiality that was like tonic to the weary girl he addressed. They watched a minute, till Winifred and Rosaline, whose voices had come nearer in the winding walks below them, retreated slowly again. While they so stood, the sweet breeze moved their hair agreeably, and produced the faintest rustle in the laurel hedge.

'Will I see your partner soon?' said Harrie then, in her delicate little voice.

'Before the end of the week, she hopes to be over again. In the interval—this is her message—will you be so kind as to keep her sister out of it? There's no reason, is there, that she should be mixed up?'

His voice was just a little pleading, and Harrie gave him an impulsive hand. 'There is not, indeed,' she said, 'and you may trust me for it. You're very, very kind—both you and she.'

They then talked about indifferent things, leaning on the terrace wall, till Rosaline and Winifred, whose light dresses were now once more flashing behind the budding lilacs, saw fit to rejoin them. But not all the winds of spring could cool the little flush on Harrie's pale cheek ; and Rosaline's sharp eye was the first to note it.

IX

ANN came in due course, and the girls' next talk was in comfort and at leisure. It took place on a day of rain in the Vicarage schoolroom, under the fitful cover of Miss Lindt's practice. Peace breathed upon the Vicarage, owing largely to the fact that Muriel was in bed with a cold; Bertha was free to play even beyond the stated hour if she chose, and Harrie to sit with Ann over the schoolroom fire, and help her to mend stockings for Mrs. Grayling, free to share confidences or preserve a busy silence, as the impulse took them, or as the music allowed. Bertha, who in preparing for the concert had developed a sudden and brand-new enthusiasm for a sonata she had happened to neglect for several months, could be trusted not to attend to them at all. It is true, she gasped remarks at intervals, such as 'So,' and 'Na, na,' and 'drei und vier—ach, himmlisch'—even very rarely she appealed for sympathy across her shoulder, with a rolling eye and a rather intoxicated smile. But that was nothing to Harriet, who had long been used to her methods; and Ann was one of the enviable people with no ears, and no sense whatever of comedy out of its place.

Ann was recovering from a very bad cold, and Miss Clench began by informing her that she ought

to be in bed. Ann replied that Miss Clench looked like a fluffy little owl that had sat up too late ; and these amenities accomplished, they came to business.

Ann had had a talk with Patrick's late landlady, who was a simple cottage woman in the little country town. Mrs. Blencow, it appeared, was not without a tender heart, and had been interested in her young lodger, though he had been sufficiently troublesome. Mr. Morough had had his faults, she admitted, and what with paint and clay puddings, she had not been able to get his room clean since. Beyond this, he ordered a great many things for which he had no money to pay ; and he had had a ' turn-up ' with some young louts of the town who mocked his sketches, which had nearly landed him in the police-court. He was ill, and coughed dreadful. She did not like her little girls hanging about him, but children will do it. He had a way with him too, past her power to account for. All this Ann retailed more or less, with much conscience and no drama ; and Harrie attended, her head bent low, stitching at the stocking on her hand.

One night, the report proceeded, he came back very late and quite wet through, and Mrs. Blencow tried to make him have a fire in his small upper room. He refused, being in a sulky temper as she could see, and would only sit at the table, his head resting on his hands. The next morning, she found he had packed his small knapsack and departed—dropping, she supposed, by means of his window into the back garden, for he was ' as active-made

as a cat.' He left on the table a five-shilling piece, which was not enough to pay her bill, let alone satisfy the tradesmen.

Harrie's stocking-hand dropped in her lap ; she was watching the fire with fixed eyes, and the expression Ann did not like.

' I supposed,' she said, ' that was the way he would go. He was really offended with me—this time.'

' Mrs. Blencow saw no reason in it,' said Ann with severity, ' for she had treated him thoroughly well.'

' She wouldn't,' said Harrie briefly. ' It's only I that know anything of him, and it's I should have prevented it in time.'

' If he's so ungrateful and worthless,' said the forthright Ann, ' I don't see why you should worry. I shouldn't.'

' You're not one of them,' said Harrie, ' asking your pardon. Oh dear, I have been wondering about the Oxford doctor. Do you suppose, Ann, he left his account there unpaid as well ? '

' You're sure there was a doctor ? ' said Ann.

' No,' Harrie apologised. ' You're never sure, with Pat. It's only he said so.'

' What I mean is,' said Miss Maskery, ' if true, that would be a way of tracking him. Doctors may be common, but they're limited.'

Miss Clench laughed a grain, and looked at her.

' I like the way you talk,' she said. ' There's so much hope in your methods—not knowing the variety you are dealing with. If a Clench wants to go into the air, he goes. The only sure thing is, he will turn up again.'

' Oh, you are sure of that, are you ? ' said Miss

Maskery. 'When his bills have been paid, I suppose.'

'It does not depend at all on the bills,' said Harrie, 'only on the people he has left behind. When they deserve him really, he'll be there.'

'It's a nice irresponsible life to lead,' said Ann.

'It is,' said Harrie, 'except for the people.'

They darned for a period in sisterly concert.

'Tom will make a round of the Oxford doctors,' said Ann presently, 'if you like.'

'Oh, I couldn't have him troubled,' said Harrie.

'He's always glad to be useful,' said Ann. 'He—he's a rattling good sort.'

It did not sound sentimental, but Miss Clench, in her instinctive soul-exploration, never depended upon words. 'It seems he'd do anything for you,' she said, glancing at the plain girl.

'So he would. He'll be a useful brother-in-law, won't he?' said Ann, with a nervous laugh.

'Do you want that to happen?' said Harrie, turning the stocking.

'It's got to happen,' said Ann. 'It's the only hope now—for Rosie.'

'And what about you?' said Harrie.

A musical accompaniment, especially one that is sober and beautiful, is a great spur to intimate conversation, for it at once loosens the emotions, and soothes the nerves. Ann, for all her strength of character, had nerves; as indeed was almost inevitable, in the agitating life she led.

'I shan't marry,' said Ann.

'Why?'

'Well, it's pretty obvious, isn't it?' She looked

at her friend squarely. 'Even without Rosie at hand for contrast, as she has been all my life.' Ann frowned and winced. 'Heavens, my head is aching,' she added suddenly. 'It must be the wind.'

'Come down here,' said Harriet, dropping a cushion on the floor by her side. 'Bertha used to have awful headaches, and I know how to manage.' Ann subsided on to the hearth at her bidding, and laid her head back on Miss Clench's knee.

'Would you not wish to marry?' she said presently, when she had massaged some of the neuralgic attack away.

'That's another reason why I shan't.' Ann laughed with bitterness. 'I want it so much. Look here, Harrie, I'll tell you—when I can. I never got it said to anyone before; but you're a safe sort of kitten to talk to, if one must be a fool.'

'I'd really like to hear,' said Harrie gently. Unseen above Ann's head, she shut her eyes, for she already knew the most salient fact of the confession.

'I know a lot of things,' said Ann. 'I have taught myself hard, in order to teach these ignorant country people. You know, to get at their sort, it's not only things of the brain you must know: not only political and social principles, though that's important enough, goodness knows. It's other very common things—things of the matter of life. If you don't know about babies,' said Ann, 'and how to manage money, and how to keep a young girl in good ways—or a boy for that matter: and how best to get the children taught, and how to keep them clean and the house healthy—well, you don't get very far.'

I've learnt all that—well, partly, of course, because I liked it. I should make a capital wife—I could bring up a large family, and I *want* it.' The girl's hand struck the floor almost furiously. 'I want the work of it. I've no moony ideas about marriage.'

'None?' said Harrie.

'Oh Lord—yes, of course, there's *him*. But Rosaline's got him, and she is my sister and the little one, so what's the good of talking.' This, the root of the confession, came in a quick, mechanical mutter, the very heart of the girl speaking without her will. She swept a hand across her brow afterwards, as though Harrie's fine fingers had hypnotised the truth out of her.

Fräulein Lindt, now quiet and rapt in her corner, played half a slow movement before they resumed.

'And what does Rosaline want?' said the younger girl rather fearfully.

'She wants,' said Ann, 'to be a bride.—Yes'—she clenched her hands—'it's awful to say it, for her sister; but I know well enough what I'm talking about. I have heard her chatter often, at the times when you show yourself in what you say. I have listened and not said much: she had no idea what I was thinking—thought me sulky very likely—or jealous.' The girl gulped. 'If I had ever heard the real thing, Harrie, in what she said, I'd bite my tongue out before I said this to you now.'

'I believe that,' said Harrie.

'She doesn't want children,' pursued Ann. 'She'd hate it, and be frightened too. She hasn't an idea of what's before her, beyond the wedding-day. She has taken nothing seriously, and won't,

till it's too late.' She became almost inaudible. 'And that man, who is made for the head of a great family, and to do the country good—who shares my ideas, and could give me more if he chose to—he'll marry her for her pretty face.'

'Are you sure?' said Harrie quickly.

'I think he means to, now. I see it come nearer, every day. He's changed lately, even to me.' There was a pause.

'Ann,' said Harrie, 'does Mr. Tom think you know too much?'

'Yes,' said Ann bluntly. 'Tom's old-fashioned.'

'I thought I'd seen it in him.' Miss Clench knitted her brows, and sought in vain a solution of the case before her.

'Really, I wonder at times,' said Ann wearily, 'are men quite mad. Doesn't it really matter what we think, for the future, I mean? Are these thoughts and ideas given us for nothing but to tease our lives out, and turn our hair grey before we're thirty?'

Harrie still frowned. 'You can pass on your notions to the poor people,' she suggested.

'I can,' said Ann, still low and wearily. 'And the best of the women draw away from me, hold me at arm's length, in everything that really matters—to them and to the State—because I am a spinster. They are kind,' said Ann, 'they are dears, but there is always that little pitying smile. Just at the best, the truest, you are turned out of heaven—your own heaven, Harrie—by that smile.'

After another period of Bertha's music and Miss Clench's comforting hands, Ann turned her own

smile, which was very sweet and generous, up to her little minister.

‘ You will never know that, you nice little thing,’ she said. ‘ You are safe anyhow—that’s one comfort.’

X

THE village concert and the Escreet dinner-party fell on Saturday ; and Dr. Gudgeon came to stay for the end of the week, having, with the careless ease of a truly great man, shelved his duties as organist of a big college, in order to have what he called his Sunday out. He was fetched from the station in pomp by Mrs. Escreet herself, who exerted herself all the way home to keep him amused, and to put him into the genial humour suitable to the guest of the evening. The visitor was a short, broad man, grotesquely ugly, extremely unkempt, of an appearance indeed that would have been found repulsive in any city less tolerant of eccentricity than the one in which he had dwelt for thirty years.

He had known Mrs. Escreet's mother, and she herself had for a short time been his pupil, when she first settled as a bride at Farover ; facts which gave him, at least in his own opinion, the right to behave to her as uncivilly as he pleased. To-day he had come with the full intention of showing himself fatherly and pleasant ; but his hostess, who deigned to drive him with her own hands, had only to advance the mildest personal opinion, to have it snapped off instantly short ; as a blundering cow will snap off a dandelion that chances to lift a head in her path.

They had to pass through Stackfield to reach Farover, from end to end of the straggling village ; and as luck would have it, they came upon Miss Clench and the curate, laden with branches and flags, proceeding to the Parish Room.

‘What’s this, what’s this?’ said Dr. Gudgeon ; and Mrs. Escreet, who had bowed benevolently to the curate, felt compelled to draw up.

‘What are you doing here?’ Thus it appeared the great man was distantly acquainted with the curate, during his recent Oxford career.

‘Only a little concert we’re getting up, sir,’ said the curate, with a shy laugh. ‘All in the day’s work.’ He was very young, and quite newly settled in Stackfield ; thus it need not be said he had imbibed the local awe of Farover and its mistress.

‘A church restoration fund that needs repleting,’ said Winifred, holding her young horse with difficulty.

‘What a way to get money,’ said the polite musician. ‘Yowling and tootling, eh?—one after another. Far better ask ’em straight.’

‘We’ve tried that,’ said the curate with diffidence. ‘Allow me, Mrs. Escreet.’ At a sign from her, he went thankfully to the horse’s head : out of Gudgeon’s range, as he thought.

‘Well then, the thing’s not wanted and you should drop it,’ that authority shouted after him. ‘Hey? What are *you* up to now?’ He settled upon Harrie, whose eye he had caught. He had a known taste for lively young people, and the passing spark promised liveliness.

‘Hanging the national flags,’ she answered at

once. 'I had to choose, and I found all the green ones were least faded.' She aimed this at Winifred, who barely smiled.

'You had better not omit the stars and stripes,' she said. 'It's more showy than green. Where is my husband, Harriet?'

'I left him at the house. He said he didn't want me, and Mr. Finch did,' was Harriet's explanation.

Winifred, furious with her bad taste shown before this exigent visitor, drove on with lifted brows and mouth set in disdain. It was only after some minutes of lofty silence that she discovered Dr. Gudgeon chuckling silently.

'What's that girl, Winifred?' he said.

'A Miss Clench, come to us to be Gervase's amanuensis for a time. She is Brian's daughter,' she added rapidly, realising that he would be bound to track the name down.

'Now I could have guessed that,' said Dr. Gudgeon. 'I could have guessed that all alone. And where's the impossible Brian?'

'Nobody knows,' said Winifred coldly. She was rather wishing that the pony would walk faster up the hill.

'Or cares,' her visitor scoffed. 'Somebody cared at one time, I remember.'

He had a terrific memory, on which all the inconvenient or disintegrating facts were engraved, and the convenient or sociable facts omitted.

'Now don't be absurd,' said Mrs. Escreet, with an effort to avoid the douche. If she persuaded him of genuine indifference, he might let her off.

'Ho, didn't they,' said Dr. Gudgeon. 'There

was a time I have not forgotten, you couldn't let his name alone.'

'Well, no more could Gervase,' said Winifred, showing fight. 'He occupied our minds enough that spring, for the best of reasons.'

'And you were thankful when he left,' said the organist. 'Both of you, hey?' He shook with an inner chuckle again. 'The Clenches always studied the art of taking leave, for the best of *their* reasons, which were always good. Well, well: I remember the little Kathleen at that, so perhaps I shouldn't talk.'

'Was that a sister?' Winifred fastened on the diversion. 'Tell me, did you ever hear of a nephew?'

'Kathleen had a boy—delicate though. I think he died.'

'Whom did she marry?' said Mrs. Escreet.

'That's the last thing to ask, isn't it?' said Gudgeon, shaking again. 'Since she didn't marry me. Not that I ever asked her, but she could have done it if she chose. Long was the name,' he added, catching a memory suddenly as the aged do.

Winifred set her lips, and flicked the pony.

Knowing her tyrant's taste for young society, Mrs. Escreet had retained Tom to lunch, and engaged Rosaline to stay over Sunday. Harrie she did not consciously count, as she had no wish for the conspicuous little Irish girl to interfere with her schemes in Rosaline's interest. She had granted her leave to pass all the afternoon in the village if she preferred; but Harriet, as things turned out, did not avail herself of the permission altogether.

She came back to Farover after lunch, about two in the afternoon, and found Mr. Champion in the rose-garden, smoking the roses.

'Where are they all?' she said with brilliant eyes. Her chin was up, and she looked defiant of the world. Tom had seen it in her gait as she came across the lawn. He compared her in his mind to a well-fitted small ship, flying the challenge to a congregated squadron that was closing on her. The free poise of her, to Mr. Champion's mind, always suggested the sea; in which connection, it may be said, Tom had failed for the navy in his youth, before he settled, at the maternal command, into politics.

'They are sitting round Miss Maskery at the piano,' he said. 'A conclave. Cousin Win manœuvred Gudgeon magnificently, though he assured her he preferred to go to sleep. Rosie's as nervous as they make 'em and wouldn't have me, so I stepped out. Is anything the matter?' he added at leisure.

'Nothing,' said Harrie proudly; 'only Mr. Grayling does not want me to supper to-night.'

'Does not *want* you?'

'No. I'll have to dine with you.'

'Delighted,' said Tom with a bow. He was rather off his bearings, and redder than usual.

'Unless of course Mrs. Escreet sends me to bed,' proceeded Harrie, sitting on the sunk wall of the rose-garden, and swinging her foot. 'It's pretty clear she doesn't want me either.'

'What has made you angry?' said Tom.

'Is that not enough? However, I'll tell you a story, to amuse you while you wait out here. It'll make you

laugh, as it did me. I was hanging the flags with Mr. Finch, who's a donkey at it, and hammering my fingers while he passed the nails. That was in the Parish Room, where I've spent the entire morning, and the gas escaping somewhere we couldn't find it though we blackened our hands with dust. Well, there we were, the pair of us, when in comes Muriel. Do you know her ? '

' Yes,' said Tom, who seemed troubled.

' The curate, seeing the child first, asks her what it is. " Nothing," says Muriel, sitting down solidly on a form just near to us. " Where is your mother ? " I asked, for she'd been tired out before I came. " Mother's at home in the drawing-room," says Muriel, " and Mrs. Champion is sitting by the sofa." I'm sure I'm sorry, Mr. Tom,' —for the young man had turned his back to her suddenly, as though to smoke a plant in his rear.

' Go on,' he said.

' " What have you come for ? " said Mr. Finch : for you should have seen the child's expression. " Simply to stay here, thank you," said Muriel. " The drawing-room sent me."—Well'—as Tom turned about again—' I sat up on the ladder and laughed. Would not you have done as much ? And poor Mr. Finch like a beetroot, though he was only telling me about his mother at Malvern.'

' Before the child,' was all Tom muttered. ' He seemed almost as restless as she did.

' Muriel's quicker than most children,' said Harriet. ' That I'll say in their excuse. I am sure they never guessed she understood. But the curate, of all people ! Mr. Tom, what harm would I do the

curate, tell me that? I—I took the greatest care of him.’ The girl almost broke down, for the irrepressible Irish humour was struggling with her real emotion. ‘Oh, you’ve seen me sitting pretty patient in my chair, have you not?—but I’m mad with it sometimes. What’s different, between me and other girls, that’s what I want to know. What is there different?’

‘If an apology from me,’ said Tom, ‘would do any good—but in this case, Miss Clench, I can hardly dare to speak.’

‘You need not,’ said Harrie, having pity on his confusion. ‘I only told you because you were there, and it was mean of me, indeed it was. I’d have let it out on anyone else just as easy: only there you were in my way, and so you had to have it.’ She laughed through her tears and tossed her head. ‘I’ll go to the house, I think,’ said she. ‘I’ll not have lunch if they have finished. If Ann comes, say I’m upstairs. You’ll be very kind.’

And with that, and a beam of grey-blue Irish eyes, she flickered across the grass-plot and was gone. Five minutes later, Ann swept up to the gate on her bicycle, and Mr. Champion was there to open it.

‘Something’s wrong,’ he said simply, taking the bicycle from her hands, and lifting it for safety over the low wall.

‘Wrong? Oh, that poor little thing! Have you seen her?’

‘She didn’t tell me the whole of it,’ said Tom.

‘Uncle Fred is the whole of it,’ Ann replied, ‘and these infernal chatterers. He’s very bad this morning, Tom, and you know what he can be. I

felt in my bones, as soon as I saw him, there was something up. But I never thought he could tell a girl to her face he did not want her to dinner ! ’

‘ If he must,’ said Tom, ‘ it’s better than making his wife do it.’

‘ She couldn’t,’ said Ann. ‘ Even he could see she is not fit to-day. You would think the mere rudeness to her, when she had invited Harrie, would have been sufficient, wouldn’t you ? But no. Do you know Uncle Fred’s face, when he deals with a story of that sort ? It’s—it’s vicious.’

‘ Then the whole business is out,’ said Tom.

‘ I could do nothing,’ said Ann, sinking down exhausted in the rose-garden. ‘ I tried, but he knew it all, and I could only correct the details. They know all about the Blencows, and the bills, and the police row, and escaping through the window, and even how she met him in Stackfield Lane. If you ask how they discovered it was her money—I can only send you to pick over the pig-tub of tattle there has been. I shan’t mince my words,’ said Ann, stamping. ‘ I’m mad at it, and mad to have given her away, and mad to have stood an hour before my uncle and your mother to be talked at. But sooner me than Aunt Amabel.’

‘ Was he down on you ? ’ said Tom.

‘ Not more than he’s been before,’ said Ann grimly. ‘ Uncle Fred doesn’t need to be told I’m a busybody. He says, this will be a lesson : and so it will,’ said Ann, with marked pugnacity.

‘ Lord ! why didn’t you use me at first ? ’ the young man groaned. ‘ They would never have suspected me.’

‘Think not?’ said Ann, and looked at him squarely; his eyes turned from hers. ‘Well, I am going in to her—is she in her room? I shall jolly well tell her not to trouble about them further—bothering over this stupid concert as she’s been.’

‘Muriel is out of it, I hope,’ said Tom, who had a big young man’s sympathy for little girls.

‘Muriel’s howling in her bedroom. Poor Aunt Amabel, a pretty life she has.’ Ann shrugged and prepared to go. She was sitting on the wall of the rose-garden, just where Harrie had sat, and Mr. Champion could not help noticing the contrast.

‘Did you tell them the fellow was her cousin?’ he said suddenly.

‘Yes, I did, and made things no better. If I had said her brother, they might have listened to me. I wish she had one,’ said Ann inconsequently.

‘Yes, that’s the sort of thing she wants,’ said Tom rather low.

‘Look here, Tom,’ said Miss Maskery, leaning her elbows on her knees. ‘You know them best, and I had better apply to you. I am aware Mrs. Escreet is good for nothing in this affair: I have the sense to see that, and I shan’t attempt her. What about Mr. Escreet?’

‘No good either,’ said Tom, without even removing his pipe.

‘Harriet’s worked for him, and jolly well. What’s his quarrel with her?’

‘He has none,’ said Tom, ‘but he wouldn’t take her part in this. It’s not enough to like her, remember,’ he added, with a visible effort. ‘You

must respect. On my honour, I'd sooner work on the little curate than on Cousin Gervase.'

'Well,' said Ann, 'I admit you ought to know. As for Finch,' she added suddenly, 'he's head-over-ears, but that's not the point.'

'He'll sing the better for it to-night,' said Tom grimly.

Ann rose and shook herself. 'Rosie is going to play up, I hope,' she said, reminded of her sister by sounds from the drawing-room. 'They are counting on her for a song, because the instrumental pieces are rather heavy on the programme.'

'That good governess will make them heavy,' Tom agreed; 'to judge by her rehearsal, it's the word. Miss Clench is largely wanted, I understood, to manage her.'

'She always seems wanted to manage things that are just too much for her,' said Harrie's friend; having disposed of which sentiment, Ann nodded to Mr. Champion, and strode up the terrace steps.

Ann Maskery did not go to the drawing-room. She went to the kitchen, where she was heartily welcomed by all the servants; and sitting among them with her arms on the well-scrubbed deal table, she laid a plot. She found to her relief that her fellow-conspirators were already heart and soul in her cause—which was an agreeable surprise; for to order a private dinner in a house not your own, and to which you are not even invited, would be considered by most people a difficult thing to do. Yet Ann found that her experience had covered many a harder undertaking. The argument she

presented publicly was that Miss Clench and she desired to be punctual at the concert, and did not want to trouble Mrs. Escreet, whose hospitality no one doubted. The dinner-party, reduced to six since the elder Mr. Champion had refused, was already complete : that Hester, who was working out her table, must allow. Two stray girls would overbalance an admirable scheme ; and, as Miss Maskery said jovially, there was not enough cold mutton for them at the Vicarage. Added to this, Miss Clench was putting the last stitches in a blouse which had to be worn that evening. Well then—would Marion conceive it possible to send the kitchen-maid stealing up with a tray at half-past six ?

Marion, much entertained by Miss Ann, conceived it : and it was something better nor cold mutton she should have. Hester would also fetch the blouse to finish, only she wished Miss Clench would wear her nice dress.

‘ It’s much too nice, Hester,’ said Ann solemnly. ‘ So far, I have only been allowed one peep into the cupboard. I sometimes wonder if Farover will ever be considered good enough for that garment—even next month at the ball.’

‘ Miss Clench is comical about her clothes,’ said Hester.

‘ Wouldn’t you like to dress her ? ’ said Ann. ‘ Tell me that, Hester. Wouldn’t you just ? ’

‘ Well, with a figure like that——’ said Hester. ‘ But I doubt she’d ever let me have the chance, she does for herself that persistent. Now go along, Miss Ann, we’ll not be teased by you longer, and Marion with her hands full.’

‘Miss Ann gets plainer than ever,’ said Marion later, singing over her pots. ‘But so cheerful-like, you sometimes wonder if she knows it.’

‘We can’t all be comely,’ said Hester, who was not.

Dinner, thanks to the brilliant efforts of Gervase and Tom, alternately tactful and hearty, was tided over successfully. Nor should thanks in the matter be omitted to Winifred the housewife, who, with Marion’s aid, had constructed a meal such as Dr. Gudgeon had not eaten for years. He said so loudly at the third course, and from first to last he did full justice to it. Winifred breathed more freely when it was over and she could confide her late anxieties, in the privacy of the drawing-room corner, to Mrs. Champion’s sympathetic ear. Rosaline remained behind, for she did a little smoking on occasion, and the ogre was visibly pleased to retain her at his side.

Thus the elder ladies talked in peace, and the thing they talked of was Miss Clench, and the newest disclosures concerning her: a subject which could not have been attacked so frankly with little Rosaline in the room.

Mrs. Champion, who in reaching the solid dignity of Member’s wife, had had to forget an early brewery, was nevertheless a person whom even the wonderful Mrs. Escreet could not ignore. She had made her husband’s fortune by her social enterprise and resourcefulness, and her studied tact was so fine as to be almost imperceptible. She knew perfectly what to say in all likely junctures of life, whether the matter were art criticism, the extravagance of

factory girls, or an unforeseen accident to the best tablecloth. She knew now what to say about Miss Clench—almost better than Winifred did ; for Mrs. Champion, not being at close quarters with the young woman, was far above personalities. It was, as she said several times, a question of general principle. The election omnibus had been that too, Mrs. Escreet remembered : and the survival of the offertory plate at Stackfield, and the Risings' nursery canary. General principles embraced the commonest things in Mrs. Champion's life ; while to people who habitually do without them, like the Escreets, they remain impressive in the abstract, but not agreeable. They fell into the same category at Farover as did fire-escapes and lightning-conductors, admirable inventions in themselves, but really too depressing to have about the house.

Mrs. Escreet felt a slight depression now, while Mrs. Champion talked, and also a slight drowsiness. She would have preferred the subject played with more lightly, with that chaffing, tolerant air of— ' For that matter we have all done such things, and everybody would do so if they dared—not to say cared,' which was the essence of the Farover spirit, and which Winifred hit off very nearly as well as Gervase. As it was, she twisted her fan, and said the girl was not bad, and no doubt would do in some houses, but those houses not either Risings or Farover, for reasons not identical, but perhaps analogous.

' She has a free manner,' said Mrs. Champion, who was not to be overawed by long words, and preferred clear ones. ' Not off-hand, like some girls

one knows, but free. Ann Maskery, now, is off-hand with her elders, and often rude. But, I was just thinking this morning, you can't put your finger on any rudeness in Miss Clench.'

'I could,' said Winifred lightly. 'I call it rude, when she accompanies me, to say "You'll have this down, I think," and transpose it a whole tone before I ask her. That is of a piece with her telling my maid I looked better in brown than black. It's true, of course, and if she had said it to me myself, I should not have objected so much. That would be merely, as you say, the kind of thing that Ann would do. Ann is frequently ponderous, just like her poor father. I often wonder where Rosaline gets her manners.'

'Miss Maskery is a nice, pretty girl,' said Mrs. Champion, seeing an encomium was expected. 'Steady at early church, too, Mr. Grayling says, always in the right place in the house, and ready to be pleasant. Her singing I can say I like thoroughly, Winifred, it's so really refined—just what one wants one's girls to learn. She would not mind dressing a little quieter, I dare say, if she came to me. Not that I've an objection to pretty clothes, it's only the general principle——'

Here she broke off, for Miss Maskery herself walked in. Without a word of apology for interrupting the tête-à-tête on the sofa, she stepped swiftly across, and paused by Winifred, biting her lip.

'Well, dear,' said her hostess smoothly, 'have you had enough smoke? Suppose we take the duet once through before they come in.'

‘What’s the good?’ said Rosaline too loud.
‘He’s gone.’

‘Whom do you mean?’ said Mrs. Escreet, amazed.

‘Both of them. Dr. Gudgeon’s gone too. It’s Tom’s fault—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Champion, but it really is. I tried to stop him, but he talked about the curate’s stupid song, and Dr. Gudgeon said he’d give his wig to hear it; and Mr. Escreet and I told him the sort of thing the concerts always were, and how vulgar little Finch is, and that you’d quite given up trying to help them.’

‘And that made him more inclined than ever,’ said Winifred. She was greatly vexed, but her voice was controlled, partly in warning to Rosaline. ‘Well, he will soon be back again,’ she said. ‘Meantime, sing for Gervase and for us, Rosie.’

‘Mr. Escreet’s gone after them,’ said Rosaline.

‘What?’ Winifred stirred, and her voice took a new tone.

‘And Ann and the Irish girl, not to mention the kitchen-maids. Everyone in the house has gone.’

‘Ann?’ queried the visitor. ‘Is your sister staying here too, my dear?’

‘Ann had dinner in Miss Clench’s bedroom,’ said Rosaline, ‘and Tom knew of it. They did it on the sly and slipped off. If you will excuse me’—her voice shook—‘I’m going down there now, Mrs. Escreet. It’s not to be borne.’ She did not specify what was not.

‘You are not to sing?’ queried Mrs. Champion, really puzzled. She divided the question between

them, for Winifred had risen too, as though mechanically. 'I thought Tom said——'

'I shan't sing unless I must,' said Rosaline, breaking in. 'Are you coming, Mrs. Escreet?'

'Well, really,' Winifred said, in the same unusual voice, 'one might just as well look in on them, Grace. There might be something going on.'

Perplexed, but still matching the situation, Mrs. Champion got up, shaking her skirts with dignity.

'Perhaps I may order the carriage to follow us down,' she suggested. 'Papa asked us to be early. I can fetch Tom—after his song.'

It may vaguely have occurred to Mrs. Champion that in the general turnover of her polite and proper world, and amid the fever of these various young women, it might be as well to fetch her valuable son away.

XI

MR. CHAMPION, with the best will in the world to be punctual to his scheduled time, arrived late at the Parish Room. It was entirely owing to Dr. Gudgeon, who fell into such an acrimonious argument with Gervase in the drive, and grew so excited over it, that he nearly turned straight back into the dining-room to finish it at his ease.

They arrived at the moment when, having given Tom up, the management—consisting of the burly Vicar and his tired wife—had asked Miss Lindt to play again. ‘Just once more, if she will be so good,’ was the message conveyed by Harrie to Bertha, who, voluble and beaming with excitement, was spreading herself in the audience among the village mothers. The form of the request indicated, firstly, that Miss Lindt had been used rather too often during the evening to fill gaps in the programme ; and, secondly, that Miss Lindt was so far from being unwilling to perform, that the management was apprehensive of her remaining in occupation of the piano-chair when her part was concluded, and so had to hint at a possible end to her labours.

The audience, however, showed itself by no means tired of Miss Lindt : seeming, indeed, to find in her an endless source of innocent hilarity. The heavy village boys nudged one another, as they

watched her antics open-mouthed, much as the small schoolgirls had done at Versailles. The village of Stackfield was not quite sure that she was not sent as a 'comic' to replace Mr. Champion: for Tom was an old entertainer, and whatsoever the performance called itself, concert or theatricals or bazaar, they counted on his being allowed to give them at least one 'roar.'

Now, as Bertha, squaring her elbows, sat down on the creaking chair, Dr. Gudgeon and his companions at the outer door heard quite a creditable thumping and giggling among the tightly packed audience.

'Who's up—the curate?' Gervase enquired of the doorkeeper, a former stable-lad of his own, who was now in the service of Mrs. Champion.

'No, sir. This is a lady as plays. Makes the piano hop, she does, better than a pianola. You'll want to get in, sir, to watch her.'

'No,' said Mr. Escreet. 'Hearing will do for us—eh, Gudgeon?'

'I shouldn't wonder if it would,' grunted the organist. 'When's the curate coming on, you fellow?'

'Well, sir,' said the young groom, staring in awe at this novel and horrid apparition, 'Mr. Finch, sir, he's having a rest. You see, he has to keep order with the boys as well, sir, and with his black face, it's difficult.'

'So it would be.' Dr. Gudgeon began to appreciate his circumstances. 'Here, Champion, what's your face like? Black's the fashion in this building.'

'I dare say any strong colour will serve,' said Tom, at which the groom-boy began sniggering, for the personnel of Risings, at least the female part of it, were accustomed to lament Mr. Tom's over-healthy complexion. 'How's it going, Jimmie?' Tom added, for he felt more proprietorship in the concert than either Gervase or his guest.

'Well, sir, Mr. Finch he amused them a bit, but, between ourselves, they'd have liked a few more songs.'

'Why don't they ask, then? I dare say someone would oblige.'

'Well, sir, fact is, they don't want to worry Mrs. Grayling, she's been taking so much trouble. Old Ossler, sir, he told the boys they might be thankful it's no worse than it is.'

The critic Gervase appreciated this. 'But Rosie should have come,' he murmured, 'the affected little monkey. I say, Tom, can't you go back and fetch her?'

'I'm on next, I think,' mumbled Tom, who had more than an idea he was in disgrace with Rosaline. 'When does this woman intend to begin?'

'Miss Clench is a-speaking to her,' Jimmie informed them from within the door. 'Arguing she seems, very lively. Ho! did you ever—she's taken away the music now. *There* she goes, sir—she's off.'

Harriet's quick eye had noticed the familiar ruddy face of Mr. Champion at the door, and she had entreated Bertha to be brief, and abandon the lengthy overture she was preparing. Bertha, though annoyed and impatient, submitted with

a shrug to this unreasonable request, and tossed her score on to the piano. She played a pair of character-scenes from the Schumann Carnival, and, undiverted by written music, she set her whole artistic mind to conquering the freaks of a third-rate instrument in a fifth-rate room.

The village audience creaked and whispered a good deal during the solos, but neither of the three gentlemen moved. Even in the pause between the two sections—which was not long, for Bertha's hands hung on the keys—Dr. Gudgeon only muttered his mechanical 'What's this, what's this?' and Mr. Escreet opined in a whisper that he was damned. At the end of all, while the whole room was rocking with amused applause, the second party from Farover suddenly arrived, and effectually dislodged the group in the doorway, now reduced to two, for Tom, summoned by Harrie's eye, had slipped in to notify his arrival to the management, and had sat down at Miss Clench's side in the second row.

The audience at once stopped applauding to gape and shuffle, for Mrs. Escreet and Miss Rosaline were the classical beauties of the district, and Mrs. Champion was *par excellence* its great lady. That these swells should condescend, with skirts of sticky satin, and handsome cloaks hardly concealing their bare shoulders, to burst into their entertainment at the eleventh hour, was a thing to be talked of long, and also accounted for. The local worthies, always hopelessly personal where causes or charities are concerned, debated whether the unusual event was a compliment to the Vicar, or natural interest in Mr. Tom. All three ladies were granted to be

'interested,' Rosaline not least, with that admirable frankness and penetration which our yeoman ranks possess.

'Mr. Tom, 'e's answerable,' was the opinion of the innkeeper's mother-in-law. 'Miss Rosaline, she comes after 'im like, and Mrs. Escreet to keep her in countenance. That would be a sign they're 'overing, and we shall 'ear of something before we're much older.'

'She looks like a bride âlready,' said the village dressmaker to her sister from London, 'with those silvery bugles on the white.'

'I'd dearly like to see the neck,' said the sister, 'being of more account in the ensemble than waist and gathers. Perhaps when it gets hot she'll take her cloak off.'

'Mr. Tom he's a-talking to Miss Clench,' murmured some younger critic; 'Miss Rosaline she'll be hurt.'

'Well,' said the mother-in-law, stalwart in Tom's cause, 'how should he have seen Miss Rosaline, not having eyes in his back 'air.'

Winifred, signalling to the herd around her to keep seated, took a modest place behind on a rush-chair, and made room for Dr. Gudgeon beside her. Dr. Gudgeon, on his part, had seized Bertha on her descent from the platform, and was talking to her angrily in German. When it became impossible longer to ignore Mrs. Escreet's demands on him, he made a lurch, shouldering awkwardly and roughly to her side.

'What's that woman doing in this galère?' he demanded, in the least restrained of tones. 'She

referred me to her employers, but I refer myself to you. What have you been after, Winifred ? ’

‘ Of whom are you speaking ? ’ said Mrs. Escreet, thankful that the general clatter of jubilation caused by Tom’s mounting to the platform drowned this unpolished address. ‘ Do you refer to the Graylings’ governess ? ’

‘ You know best what she calls herself, and where she lives. I know what she is, and where she ought to be ; and that’s on the public platform. And if you don’t pack her about her business, and that without delay, I will.’

Winifred laughed. She had long lost the faculty of feeling small when addressed by Dr. Gudgeon. The drawback to habitual boorishness is, that the boor is incapable of getting his sincere indignation believed.

‘ Who is responsible for her ? ’ snapped the Doctor. ‘ Where does she come from ? ’

‘ Miss Clench was responsible for her coming into the district in the first instance, as I am for Miss Clench’s coming. Perhaps I must claim responsibility after all.’

‘ Well,’ said Dr. Gudgeon, ‘ will you take her up to-morrow and introduce her to George Harmon, mentioning my name ? ’

‘ No,’ said Winifred, still laughing. ‘ To-morrow’s Sunday.’

‘ Very good. Where’s Miss What’s-her-name ? ’ Before his hostess could stir to prevent him, he raised his great bulk, disturbing all the chairs again, and lurched away up the room. He plumped without apology into the chair Tom had left vacant

at Harrie's side, and began to talk to her at once. Winifred and Rosaline, left desolate and more irritated than ever, had no choice but to attend to Mr. Champion's 'turn' with as good a grace as might be.

Tom recited a poem that all the audience knew by heart, as could be seen in a number of cases by their moving lips. But, such was his power and popularity, that a roar of laughter greeted every point, as surely as the gun replies to the match, and he had small need to emphasise the jests by attitudes or grimaces—which things were not indeed his 'style.' He then gave them a short scene between the village idiot and a lady canvasser, in which he represented both parties, and his feminine falsetto arguments were most naturally rendered. This effort was quite new, and was judged in conclave afterwards as the cleverest thing he had ever done. At the time hardly anybody laughed, owing to the effort of trying to understand, and the fear of 'hurting Miss Ann.'

Finally Tom pulled himself together and sang them a sea-chanty, with no voice at all, but such heartfelt fervour that they stamped with rapture, and called tempestuously for an encore.

'I'm sorry,' said Tom, returning to his own character, with his own smile. 'That's the first song I ever sang, and I couldn't do that again, if you gave me all the collection.'

'Sooner restore you nor the church, sir,' said a wit, well concealed among the clustering heads.

'That's kind of you, Ned Challen,' said Tom. 'But I'm pretty fit, as it happens—and younger than the church.'

There was general delight at this unforced humour.

‘Now,’ Tom resumed, studying a programme, ‘where are we? Miss Maskery is going—ah—Mr. Grayling is going to read a portion of the “Tramp Abroad,” by the celebrated Yankee author Mark Twain.’

‘We knows it,’ said a malcontent. ‘Can’t curate give us a song?’

‘Yes, a song, a song,’ echoed many, turning furtive but greedy eyes to Rosaline, whose white satin made her more desirable.

‘With Dr. Gudgeon there in front I just won’t,’ muttered Miss Maskery.

‘Quite so,’ said Winifred. ‘Refuse, it is absurd.’

‘Miss Maskery is entreated,’ said Tom from the platform, his laughing face turned to her, ‘humbly entreated to condescend—ah, no, I fear it is useless: Miss Maskery has a cold. Well, shall we ask Miss Lindt to sing to us?’

This suggestion was greeted with some laughter, for Bertha, on whose neat list of duties ‘accompaniment’ stood large as the next item, had climbed to the platform and reseated herself. She meant to go through with that accompaniment, the attitude suggested, whether anyone appeared to sing the air attached or not.

‘I had better find Mr. Finch,’ said Mrs. Grayling’s exhausted tone, as her thin form rose at the side. ‘Oh, Miss Clench, if you would be so good: in the kitchen.’ For poor Mr. Finch, overcome by the incursion of well-dressed ladies, all of his acquaintance, had retired to wash his face.

'What's this, what's this?' said Dr. Gudgeon, annoyed at Harriet's moving. 'Sit down, you: nobody wants a song.'

'A song, is it, or to turn the pages?' said Harrie to Mrs. Grayling. She had been far too occupied in collecting her unknown ogre, and in satisfying his curiosity, to attend to later events in the room.

Alas! her familiar tone, penetrating though low, awakened Bertha, lost in a dream on her music-stool. With a flash of that instinct, which in absent-minded collectables replaces an hour's strained attention in ordinary persons, she swept up the sentiment of her surroundings, and incontinently, before friends and foes and the indifferent world, she gave Harrie's dearest secret away.

'Piano solos tire,' said Bertha, turning ponderously and speaking loud. 'That is natural, I understand it. My friend there, her sing-voice is quite good. Harrie, you will sing for these so-worthy people a little?'

'Oh, Bertha!' gasped Harrie; but the public, led vigorously by Tom Champion, burst into applause. Miss Clench was generally appreciated in the village, which liked her partly for herself, and partly because 'Vicar' disapproved of her. She was not now allowed to protest, and at every attempt to speak she was drowned by a new outburst.

'First-class,' said Tom, looking redder than usual, though he was smiling. 'Come along, Miss Clench. You are given over to the lions.'

'Well I never,' said Harrie aloud to herself; but she went, as though suddenly taking a decision, and stepped to the platform with her chin up.

‘Am I to give them what they like?’ she whispered, with a gleam as she passed Tom.

‘Some-sing not great Art,’ said the incorrigible Bertha, as though responding to the thought, pounding a few careless chords. ‘Just a little some-sing that will speak to them.’

Miss Clench put her hands behind her, and sang as she stood, in her neat plain blouse and skirt of the working-girl on holiday. Her eyes were levelled above the ranks of friends and enemies. She felt her will tighten, the more for knowing the Escreets and Dr. Gudgeon in her audience. She would give them what they liked, her friends the simple folk, at the command of Bertha, her intimate; and all her roguish adaptable Irish nature came to her aid. All that can be urged in her defence to such as may condemn her proceeding, is that through her whole career at Farover, it was the only conscious revenge she ever took.

She sang—knowing Mrs. Escreet detested it—the ‘Last Rose of Summer’; lingering lusciously over every sentimental phrase. She let out as much voice as she thought the room would stand, and articulated every syllable clearly. She was not at all correct, and knew it. She broke the time and altered the words. She lingered on the high note, until anyone would have sworn the breath in her little body must give out, and Bertha, that admirable artist, followed her in almost audible protest. Not content even with this enormity, she transposed the whole phrase an octave higher in the last verse, singing with the ‘little voice’ that was even more delicate and touching than the big. She

was, in short, all that Winifred thought contemptible, and all that Mrs. Champion called unrefined.

Only, the village audience loved her ; and the men—gentlemen, yeomen, and boors alike—fell at her little feet. Both things, it must be contended, were the immediate consequence of being born a Clench, and had really very little to do with singing at all.

‘Delicious,’ gasped the purist Gervase from his wife’s side, pushing forward quite unconsciously to be nearer to her who sang.

‘By God, what a voice,’ swore the boor Gudgeon, caring no whit that he should be overheard and condemned, whether by his hostess or the Vicar who stood near.

‘If that isn’t as fine as the big gramophone in the shop at Abingdon,’ said the innkeeper’s mother-in-law, wiping her eyes, which were running over with real tears. ‘And sweet she looked while she was doing it so easy all the time.’

CHAPTER XII

WHETHER the sentiment in Winifred inimical to Miss Clench was strengthened by the foregoing scene, I leave it to such as now know her to judge. Harrie, who had faced her on almost every other territory, had dared to face her now on ground that was her peculiar property. She had stepped within the ring, and the queen of that ring could no longer even pretend to be indifferent. All Sunday long, Dr. Gudgeon, the great musician of her world, the final court of appeal in artistry, who had guided and approved her own career, would do nothing but talk to Harriet, or wanting her, talk about Bertha Lindt. Harrie, he said carelessly, had time before her, but Bertha was an immediate responsibility. He intended to carry her off with him to Oxford, and, if she could stand the tests he applied, summon her to meet him in London the following week. At intervals during the day of rest he spent at Farover he flew to the writing-table to scrawl off notes to various eminent persons : some, as Winifred gathered, containing songs of triumph merely, others to put off the engagements that were too important to be blankly disregarded, during the period he proposed to devote to his newest interest ; and all of them calculated to infuriate in the

highest degree such correspondents as might be able to decipher the communication.

All this was bad, but there was worse for Mrs. Escreet to bear. Rosaline, her little protégée, was angry and miserable : furious with frank jealousy, miserable at Tom's desertion, for she would regard his friendly attentions to Harriet as no less. And was that all, even ? Winifred would have asserted that was all, and no doubt she endeavoured to think so ; but she watched her husband like a lynx, and the sole reason she had for encouraging the stout organist to remain at Miss Clench's side was that she was thus secure Gervase could not be in his seat.

She had never even faintly doubted him before, amiable and soft-hearted as he was. She had never even thought of his turning from her, so one they were in heart and mind. The dread worm jealousy is most intolerable when it first crawls in ; for no unwarned owner, who has claims to culture and education, will recognise the inhabitant. The uneasiness is nerves, fatigue, irritability—anything but that shame of shames ; and Mrs. Escreet fought even the consciousness for long. But the awakening came within one week of May, and that week shook Harriet out of Farover.

Miss Clench was not happy in the interval, as may be understood. Unused to the soft riverside climate, she was not even well. Her customary pallor grew more marked, and there were rings about her eyes. She was teased with anxiety about Pat, who did not answer her letters to Bluffborough, despatched eagerly as soon as term began ; and

Geoffry, now busy staging his new play in London, had also ceased writing in the press of business and new cares.

‘She has left that,’ thought Winifred, noticing the cessation of masculine correspondence. ‘No doubt she thinks she has better game at hand down here.’ Now a year since, so vulgar a thought could never have occurred to Mrs. Escreet: a fact betraying how we degenerate under the thousand thorn-pricks of rivalry.

As to Harriet, she no longer felt the slightest impulse to confide in her father’s friend, still less in the friend’s husband. She was formal with Winifred, and business-like with Gervase, whose book, owing chiefly to the secretary’s strenuous efforts, was really advancing. But as it advanced, he lost interest in it, as it seemed; he preferred to talk of any trifle, and frequently tried to divert his assistant to conversation in work-time; but Harriet was always cold. The result of her little snubs was that the author became low-spirited, and even lazier than before; and once he betrayed a temper with which she had not credited him, and walked out of the room.

Of Tom Champion she saw little, except on the discreet occasions he seized to give her news. During Ann’s absence in a northern town, Tom had his hands fuller than before, the more so that he was himself chosen as candidate in an adjoining county. He pursued Harrie’s quest in all his leisure time, and was most clever in communicating by all means that should least annoy Rosaline. Indeed, he was so sensible in managing his own

affair, and tiding over Miss Maskery's determined efforts to quarrel with him, that the village mothers in consultation, and Hester and Marion in the kitchen, agreed that he would make an uncommon good husband when he had her, which they supposed he would.

Ann's letters were Harrie's greatest consolation, and often Tom's news and messages came to her by that safe channel. A letter of Ann's in the second week of May carried the information that Tom had been down himself to Bluffborough, with an introduction to the headmaster of the school from a common friend. He just missed Mr. Geoffry Horn, who had gone there as soon as the school met, it seemed, on the same errand. They found Mr. Wynne in perplexity, for his vagrant drawing-master had not communicated, nor had he come back to his lodging. With the exception of his heavy painting apparatus and some small unfinished models, the properties Morough had left behind were of no value ; so if he had intended to elope, there was little reason for him to fetch them. Mr. Wynne had a candidate for his post in view, and was only prevented from filling it permanently by the idea that the truant might be ill. As to his illness, it emerged that a local doctor, not connected with the school, had condemned his lungs—for it was no less than the scourge of his native island that threatened him ; that he had been advised to see a specialist, and had been given some good addresses.

The only effect of this information was to add tenfold to Harriet's anxiety. Pat had hidden for

one of two causes surely, serious illness or serious offence : and either was wearing to think of, for his little cousin's mind and heart.

' I love him,' she repeated angrily to herself by night and day, as the defiant spirit came uppermost. ' He is mine and I love him, for I have no other. How could he go away from me like that, and me caring for him as he knew I did ? '

The one idea that never tormented her, most curiously, was that of the boy's hopeless love. True, he had made love to her in excitement on the Pont des Arts, but so would any Clench have done. It had no meaning of necessity beyond the moment. It was Harrie's misfortune that, devoting herself readily in the common human manner of brotherhood, she did not know when she was loved. She went easily ahead with her arms out, till the other love that is of all passions exclusive, single-minded and narrowly selfish, smote her in the face. It was not till the very last of the lover's month that she took the buffets, each in order, and stood appalled at the havoc she had created in three hearts.

The weather was cold and wet in the early part of May, and promised ill for the Oxford festival ; but when the week of boat-races actually arrived, there seemed good hope of a change. The sun at times broke through those chill river-mists, that seemed eating the heart out of Harriet's determined hopefulness, and with the sun she could try to rediscover her lost capacity of enjoyment.

On the last day of the races Winifred was to join forces with the Champions for a river picnic ; and the week following she gave her yearly select little

dance. The Escreets possessed both a rowing-boat and a canoe ; but the nearest point of the river-curve was at twenty minutes' distance, and through sheer laziness the boat-house often lay neglected for months in succession. Only once, on a rare fine day, Harrie had been taken out in the canoe by Rosaline ; and it had been just enough to awaken her curiosity in the sly old serpent of Thames, and to stamp its charm for ever on her imagination.

On this occasion the Escreets had determined rather sadly to do for once the proper thing, having endeavoured in vain to persuade Mrs. Champion and her sons that the river, always too popular and populous a resort, was more tolerable at any time of the year rather than during this particular week. Mrs. Champion, well in the fashion, thought otherwise, but agreed on pressure to the Escreet provisions, first to make it a lunch picnic, and secondly, to go no higher in the Oxford direction than Iffley Lock ; for just beyond that point, where the race started up-stream to Oxford, the common traffic of pleasure-craft was bound to begin. Rosaline Maskery was to meet them at Iffley, the nearest point to her home ; and Mr. Champion had promised to fetch her ; for Tom had, for the exact space of a week, forsworn politics, in order to devote himself entirely to the severe task of shouting his ancient college back to a place it had lost at the head of the river.

All was planned to a nicety, the most exquisite of portable food was prepared, and when the morning of the Wednesday dawned with a gleam of sun, Winifred had reason to flatter herself that

this unusually 'busy' day might go through without a hitch. She had never hitherto considered that her own frame of mind, or that of her husband, could affect the passage of a day's pleasuring, for their tranquil receptive condition of spirit was normal, and little could ever occur to disturb them severely. It was unforeseen, and owing to no fault at all of Winifred's, that to-day her temper should be ruffled before starting.

Miss Clench came to her in the study, extending a letter, and with some slight colour in her face. 'I opened this by an oversight,' she said, 'thinking it one of mine.'

Winifred stared at her and took the letter, which was signed by an important personage, Mr. Geoffry Horn, whose acquaintance Gervase had lately made in London. It was merely the acceptance of an invitation she had sent him, begging him to spare them a week-end visit in early June. It was all formal and ordinary, as she glanced it through, but for a line added after the signature.

'I believe a young acquaintance of mine, Miss Harriet Clench, is staying with you. Will you remember me to her, and I shall be pleased to see her again.'

'Oh, he is that sort of person, is he?' said the voice in Winifred, all unconscious. She only said coldly aloud: 'Did you see there was a message for you?'

'I saw my name,' said Harrie, biting her lip. 'I am sure I am sorry,' she added. 'It is lucky it is nothing more important.'

Winifred answered nothing, and laid the letter aside.

‘ When did you meet him ? ’ she said.

‘ In Paris—twice.’

‘ And you expect letters from him,’ Winifred reflected. ‘ That would seem rather a brisk way of doing business, in more ordinary circles. Well,’ she said, ‘ I suppose you will be here when he comes.’

‘ I was wondering,’ said Harriet, as though forcing herself to speak, ‘ if you would want me to stay beyond the end of the month.’

‘ Oh—why not ? ’ said Winifred.

‘ Because if you do not, I must be trying for another situation,’ the girl said simply. ‘ I did not like to do it without telling you.’

‘ What sort of situation are you thinking of ? ’

‘ I might take up teaching again. I have been wondering,’ said Harrie, ‘ if Mrs. Grayling would take me when Bertha goes. But perhaps you would sooner have me right away.’

‘ I do not know what reason you have for thinking so,’ said Winifred, more annoyed than ever. ‘ Nor had I heard that Fräulein Lindt was to leave the Vicarage.’

‘ Well,’ said Harriet, ‘ Dr. Gudgeon has been writing to her, and wants to fetch her to London soon, to play to a concert manager. If she got an engagement to play, of course she would like it best, for she’s in no sense a teacher, really.’

‘ You recommended her as such, I understood.’

‘ For want of better,’ said Harrie. She proceeded with a new effort. ‘ I believe Mrs. Grayling would have me for Muriel : and her husband——’

‘ I may as well tell you,’ said Winifred, looking

down at her clasped hands, 'that I am quite certain Mr. Grayling will *not* have you, so you may dismiss the idea.'

'Cannot you speak for me to him?' said Harrie, catching her lip with her teeth. 'And don't you see that if you cannot—if you believe the worst of me—I ought to go away?'

At that instant and in a flash, Winifred Escreet's true self believed and knew her innocence. It was only a flash, and then the deceiving curtains of jealousy dropped again.

'I believe nothing against you till it is proved,' she said. 'It may, however, be the part of discretion to leave us in June if you desire it. You could not begin to teach before the autumn. It is simply my opinion, not my wish, that you will not get a post at the Vicarage. I have known Frederick Grayling long, and he is not a man of pliable temper or easy views. However, if they had no one else in mind,' she added, 'I would see what I could do.'

'I thank you,' said Harrie: ending this interview as she had that old one with her schoolmistress, gratitude on her lips and despair in her heart. She would have to face the Vicar in person and have it out, she decided: and being still very young, she dreaded the necessity.

Thus it arrived that Mrs. Escreet had not control of her best manner at the moment of embarkation; and Miss Clench was pale with a headache. She did not look forward to a day she could enjoy, and the relentless sun-glitter on the level reaches seemed to increase the troubled dazzle of her senses. The ease

of the party was further damped by the presence of Eustace Champion, an impeccable Eton youth of sixteen, who seemed to inspire the whole of his family with awe. Gervase alone endeavoured, quite fruitlessly, to tease him, and nobody attempted to snub. He sculled in Winifred's boat with languid elegance, pending the arrival of his brother Tom : and made conversation with her by the way, his mother throwing in an occasional respectful observation. Only when the talk turned on Tom's new constituency he was silent, watching the river with a thoughtful smile ; for Eustace differed with his family on politics, though he was always ready to conceal the misfortune from them as far as possible.

The exquisite youth took in Harrie very completely : for she and Mr. Escreet in the light canoe kept easily alongside the larger craft. Most girls on the river wore white, Eustace reflected, or some of those lacy things with pink beneath ; he supposed this one was in mourning suddenly, and had not had time to order better clothes. She was quite decent to look at, and he could not see why his mother talked of her in that way. He would seize a chance, he thought, when the party should scatter on the bank, to see what she was really good for.

' Oh,' said Harriet, at a bend of the river. ' What's that church ? '

' That's Iffley, the goal of our ambitions,' said Gervase. ' Dear me, I suppose you must see over it : how painful.'

' It doesn't look so ugly,' said Harriet at leisure.

" It is one of the architectural wonders of England,' said Gervase, ' and that is the painful part.

Win,' he called, 'I have realised, in looking about me, a duty for Harri-et. Let us put it off as long as possible.'

'If you refer to the church,' said Winifred, 'we will solve the problem by camping out of reach down here. Tom and Rosie cannot be across just yet.'

'I mean to see it,' said Harrie serenely. 'You'll put me out on the path, Mr. Escreet, and I'll go along and over the bridge.'

'I want you to make the salad, Gervase,' called Winifred clearly, turning her head, for the canoe had shot across the river away from them.

'Eustace has the latest French receipt in his waistcoat pocket,' Mr. Escreet called back.

'I'll go, if you want him,' observed Eustace, hanging on his sculls.

'You won't,' said his mother, with decision.

'What's showing?' laughed Harrie. 'I've eyes of my own. *À bientôt.*'

She sprang out as the canoe reached the bank, so lightly as barely to shake it, but giving it a gentle push backwards as she did so; then, her head held high as ever, she walked off alone along the path.

Ten minutes later Miss Clench, Rosaline, and Tom came back from the direction of the bridge together. Harriet and Rosaline, side by side, presented a somewhat odd contrast: the one pale and sable-clad, the other radiant and vigorous, in a transparent blue muslin gown, that Eustace's eagle eye could thoroughly approve. Tom was ruddy and serene as usual, a figure of healthy simplicity well suited by his summer flannels.

'Well, you have worked through the Norman period in record time,' said Gervase, when the trio appeared in the picnic field.

'I didn't see it,' said Harrie briefly. 'I'll go later perhaps if there is a chance.'

'Tom was quite ready to take her,' said Rosaline at full pitch, 'when we met on the bridge, but she suddenly refused to go on. I told her she would find heaps of other Americans there. There always are in Eights week.'

Mrs. Champion's eyes met Mrs. Escreet's. They could not quite fathom Miss Clench's proceeding in thus markedly avoiding male society. She looked thoroughly depressed now, and sat on a rushy bank with her hands clasped round her knees, watching the water. She was negligible, or at least neglected; and Rosaline, dropping into the place of honour at Mr. Escreet's side, easily established herself as the queen of the entertainment.

The picnic passed like any other picnic, Eustace and the ladies doing most of the talking. At about three o'clock Winifred, who had watched with disapproval the gradual arrival of other lively camping-parties, ejected one by one through the swirling portals of the lock that closed their view, decided to return home early, and entertain the Vicar at tea. So she and her husband departed in the canoe, and Mrs. Champion accepted the charge of the young party that remained. The plan suited her, for she had not yet accomplished her set purpose of a private talk with Rosaline, in the course of which it was her intention to lay before the prospective governess some of the general principles of Risings

Hall. Miss Maskery, suspicious of this design, had avoided her as long as possible ; and when, towards four o'clock, she felt Champion principles closing in upon her, she determined suddenly that she wished to see the race start, and ordered Tom to escort her thither.

'I was thinking of running with the second eight,' said Mr. Champion, standing before her and looking away across the fields. 'I wondered if, before I go, Miss Clench would like to see the church. Then we could all go down to the start together, eh, Rosaline ? Because I am sure that would interest her too. She has never seen a boatrace.'

His quiet persistence suggested that he thought Miss Clench left out of it, as indeed she had been all the day. The two men and the boy each claimed by a watchful female, there was nobody necessarily attached to her ; and she was certainly not in her usual social form, as Rosaline had already remarked to Tom.

'Miss Maskery must know the church by heart,' objected Mrs. Champion ; 'living close by as she has done for years. Suppose you go on, Tom, the three of you, and Miss Maskery will bring me along slower in a fashion that befits my years.' Like all ladies fond of using this phrase, Tom's mother was very well-preserved and handsome, her ample up-standing figure looking its best in a summer uniform of clean brown linen, at once more elegant and appropriate than Rosaline's finery.

So the three went on, and Rosaline stayed, unable equally to approve the arrangement, or protest. Eustace's presence might be considered

as a safeguard, of course, if the girl wanted to flirt ; but the best safeguard was the limited time, for Tom was not the man to fail his college boat ; and even granted the most practised coquette, not much, in Rosaline's view, could be done with half an hour.

Iffley churchyard was deserted, as Mr. Champion had hoped. It could hardly be otherwise, within a bare half-hour of that pretty river contest, which on a fine day draws within the limit of its one-mile course the whole of Oxford, and half London society. The festive echoes of many voices, cries and exclamations, with an occasional gay light laugh from the boats moored along the bank, came up to them even in the church enclosure ; but those sounds were all within the magic mile, and they were safe without it.

The boy Eustace, happy in his own conceit, and delighted with his companion, argued and jested the whole way along the strip of path, and over the mill-bridge. He would fain have lingered there, to watch the congregation on the bank, and to distinguish the distant flags for Miss Clench's benefit ; but Tom, a hand upon his shoulder, pushed him on.

' We have not long,' he explained, rather absently, and hardly glancing at the boats. Eustace acquiesced with easy civility ; and when they had climbed up to the church, escorted Harrie round the exterior, and pointed out the details of carved work she had to admire. Miss Clench, though wondering a little at Tom's silence, had leisure to

note how the Escreet manner seemed to be the fashion of the day, even in the case of these exceedingly young men who carried the laurels of their public schools. Eustace seemed to have nearly as much information as Gervase would have had about these Normans and their history, their methods and their tools, but he preferred at any minute to conceal his knowledge with a jest rather than to exhibit it.

‘You seem to imagine I know something,’ Harriet protested at last. ‘I wish you would start at the beginning, and say what Normans were doing here at all, promiscuously around an English university.’

The boy gave her one look, unable to believe she did not know.

‘Why shouldn’t they,’ he said, ‘if they liked the view?’ He added after an interval, ‘I don’t suppose it ever occurred to a builder, when he hacked his finger on this church, that their blood was of any value.’

‘I have heard of their blood,’ admitted Harrie.

‘Of course,’ said Eustace in haste, ‘there is bound to be some in America too. One often forgets that. We haven’t got any really, though our name begins with “Champ,” and my mother would like to get it believed. She made a good effort at it when she gave me a French name. Do you think blood matters, Miss Clench?’

‘I do,’ said the Irishwoman. ‘I think it is the only thing that does matter, where you come from.’

‘Oh, I say,’ said Eustace, with disapproval. ‘I should have thought you would have been a

democrat.' The democratic spirit, his tone suggested, was the very latest, the inevitable finish to a modern education.

'And what have I said to make you stop thinking it?' she demanded.

'Oh,' the boy said, 'ancestral and all that. That's the aristocratic line, which Tom revels in, and *we* have got to knock on the head.'

'You can knock me,' said Miss Clench meekly, sitting on a tombstone. 'But you'll knock a good democrat, I warn you.'

They had retreated to a distance, when this part of the dialogue took place, to get a fair view of the beautiful little building. There was ample room to retreat, in the quiet space behind the church, grave with worn mossy stones and aged yews, and hemmed in on all sides with grey walls except towards the river. Arriving in this haven, Tom Champion drew a breath, and then deliberately wiped his brow; for he appeared heated out of all proportion to the warmth of the fine May evening. After that, for the first time he took a good look at his companions; and setting one foot on a prostrate stone, said to the boy:

'That will do, Eustace; you can go.'

Eustace stood absolutely transfixed a moment, cut short in a fluent phrase, his mouth half-open. He was twice as clever as Tom, and had been showing particularly well with this admirable girl, who did not snub him as Miss Maskery did, and yet seemed in wit fully worthy of the best efforts he could make to divert her.

'What?' he said incredulously.

‘Wait for us, will you, at the gate.’

There was no mistaking his brother’s look, or gesture. Mr. Eustace Champion incontinently turned, and walked off among the gravestones.

‘Well,’ commented Miss Clench. ‘If that’s not severe, when he was explaining everything so nicely.’

‘I had to,’ said Tom, still showing redder than usual. ‘I had had enough.’

‘Does he always obey you so well?’

‘Yes, when I mean it. He is not,’ said Mr. Champion, with a glance in his younger’s wake, ‘such a rotter as he looks. Miss Clench, it’s not about Eustace that I want to speak.’

‘Business?’ queried Harrie.

‘Not that even. I can do no more for the time. I am not,’ said Tom, ‘even thinking of you, I am afraid, but only of myself.’

‘You’re in trouble,’ said Harrie, leaning forward and clasping her hands, her eyes quick to read the signs on his face. ‘If there was the smallest thing I could do for you, in return for the trouble you have taken, I would just thank you to ask me.’

‘The thing I have to ask,’ said Tom, ‘is already, I fear, impossible.’

He was so quiet that even now, at close quarters as they were in the level evening light, she did not suspect. She thought it was merely some confidence as to his family affairs, which he found difficult to broach before his brother.

‘It’s lovely here,’ she said to give him leisure, ‘with these black trees. This is the place where a poet could write—in praise of peace.’ An old

memory came back to her as she said it, and her eyes were wistful and soft.

'Is peace what you wish?' said Tom; and now his tone showed the inner torment.

'It should not be,' said Harrie, 'but indeed I think it will soon be that. Only do not,' she added, looking sweetly up at him, 'fear to tell me trouble because of my peace. I have not yet got it nearly, and you cannot disturb what is not there.'

'If I thought what I had to say could disturb you,' said Tom, 'could make you suffer in any way, I would leave it for ever unsaid. You have only to tell me to stop, Harriet. Before heaven, you have suffered already enough.'

She jerked her head back from him, when he spoke her name; she looked not at him, but over his head at the church tower—for he had dropped half-kneeling now to reach her level, a white figure in the deep glossy grass. Her look was fearful protest, and one little hand was raised as though to avert the storm.

And, seeing that signal, the man made a valiant effort to hold himself, to keep the storm that ravaged him from reaching and scorching her where she sat. It flashed in the one phase, 'I love you,' and for the rest, his strong hands tore the grass.

In the pause, eternal to Tom, that ensued, a pistol-shot rent the wide river-silences beyond them—the first warning of the start.

'Leave me,' said Harrie when she had got her breath; and her eyes came down to his.

'No more?'

'Yes. Leave me—and go and ask Rosaline. She's waiting for you down there.'

Tom bowed his head, accepting. 'Is that all?'

'Do not hate me,' she said with a trembling lip.

'I love you,' he explained simply as before.

'God help you,' said the Irish girl. 'It's not that, though, I should be saying.' She held out a hand, turning her head aside. 'I'm not angry at you, Mr. Champion dear, not for a moment. It's the world——'

And he went, across the long grass, and stepping carefully over the low mounds. She dropped the hand he had not touched, and watched his straight white figure go, flashing here and there among the tufted yews, till it vanished round the end of the little church. Her hands were clasped up against her chest, and her face was of patient pain. She had liked him so much—he had helped her so—but there was an end of Tom.

Sitting there still she heard the minute gun, and knew that the third shot would start the string of fleet white boats, and awake into tumult the waiting throng. She must move: she must go down, or her absence would be remarked and suspected. With an effort she stirred, glanced once round her about the peaceful close of death, where two lives had clashed so hotly and parted, and went wearily by the devious footpath to the gate. It was not till she got there that she remembered the existence of the ill-treated Eustace, who was sitting just outside the church precincts, on a stone beside the way. He was perfectly stationary there as though on guard, his eyes fixed on his beautifully

polished boots. He spoke still without looking at her, just as any common schoolboy might have done.

'I'm afraid your head's worse,' he said, with haughtiness that was merely shy. 'We had better cut, I should think, the crowd's so beastly noisy.'

'Are we not under orders?' said Miss Clench, surprised.

'If you'd rather come and wait in the boats,' said the boy, 'I'll risk the mater's wrath. I—I have got to look after you, Tom said.'

The girl did not thank him. 'It's under your brother's orders you are then,' she suggested, with a little smile, as they moved away.

'Oh, well,' said Eustace, flicking at the stones with his light stick, 'I've noticed, to get a quiet life, a man's bound to be under somebody.'

From which Miss Clench gathered, with really laudable penetration, since English schoolboys were new to her, that Eustace worshipped Tom.

XIII

THE stir the dance made was unheard-of at Farover, except on this one day of the year. It was the smallest possible affair as to numbers, for the second drawing-room could only afford comfortable turning-space for half a dozen couples; but the small number of the guests made no difference to the effort spent on their reception—rather increased it, for a ‘herd’ can never be so critical as a small coterie of friends. Non-dancers had to be asked as well, for there were plenty of other rooms, and people like the Vicar and the Champions’ agent could hardly be omitted. Yet, though the whole tale could not exceed twenty, and the preliminary dinner was restricted to four pairs, the entire establishment was in upheaval from early dawn, and Winifred’s ordinarily passive servants woke into chattering and liveliness.

‘You’ll dance, Miss Harriet, surely,’ said Hester, as she hooked the festal dress at seven o’clock. ‘It’ll do you good.’

‘I believe,’ said Harriet, ‘they have not counted me.’

‘Indeed, they have. I heard Mr. Escreet say your name.’

Harriet thought—‘It may not for all that be on Mrs. Escreet’s list,’ but she said nothing.

'I believe I've grown fatter,' she said pensively, as Hester reached the last hook. 'It's tight.' She laughed, because Hester did.

'It's nothing of the kind,' declared that good personage. 'That's your imagination, Miss Harriet. Now go along and let me look at you.'

Retreating, she swept her up and down.

'You are all I have for a long glass,' said Harrie, taking up her gloves. 'You will have to tell me what is true. It's out of fashion, isn't it?—and faded. I've had it these two years.'

'It's as pretty as a picture,' said Hester thoughtfully. She was speculating, with the conscientious attention of a good lady's maid, how such a plain dress managed it. The girl within it was as usual, not even exceptionally lively, pale of countenance, and her arms and throat covered according to the French fashion for the evening. She had beautiful little slim arms, and Hester regretted having to hide them; but the dress and the girl together, for all that, looked better than Miss Rosaline in her shimmering gauze and pearls.

'I wish Miss Ann could see you,' said Hester with real regret.

'I wish it too,' said Harrie, with a sigh. 'She's long gone, isn't she? I could do with her this evening too, for I don't know many that are coming.'

'You'll know them pretty soon,' said Hester. 'You make friends easy, Miss Harriet.'

Both thought—'And enemies too,' but neither said it. Hester and her kitchen following had a very strong suspicion of affairs in the house.

‘ Mr. Tom’s coming later,’ she observed in encouragement.

‘ Do you think he’ll talk to me,’ laughed Harrie, ‘ when he’s engaged ? ’

‘ Engaged, are they at last, miss ? I thought by Miss Rosaline’s look—she’s been very sweet this evening.’

‘ Secret, now, Hester,’ said Harrie severely. ‘ Not even Marion—but I’m sure of it.’

‘ Well, I wish them joy,’ said Hester. ‘ There’s nobody like Mr. Tom. And Miss Ann, now—she’ll be delighted.’

‘ Delighted,’ agreed Harriet, looking down. ‘ Hester, I wonder they say English gloves are bad. I wore these at the concert, and they’re just as good as new.’

She had Gervase for her neighbour at dinner : and her partner was a college crony of his from Oxford, who talked to him across her all the time. This person had heard, who shall say how, that there was a girl in the house who had set the whole neighbourhood by the ears ; and after he had been introduced to Harriet, had escorted her to dinner, and forgotten her name, he was still waiting for this exuberant young person to appear. He was not sure whether or no to suspect Rosaline, whose brilliant attire, and cheeks flushed with happy excitement, attracted all eyes to her at the table. It was the first time Rosaline had been asked by a formal card to dine at Farover, and she knew it was the recognition of a new right, which henceforth and for ever she could claim. She felt kindly to-

night even to Harrie, that colourless little mouse in blue ; though she wondered a little that she had not managed a more appropriate dress.

But Winifred and Mrs. Champion were not guilty of that mistake, and when Miss Clench came into the open ballroom, she was the centre of some very curious glances.

‘ Jacques Marot, I should judge,’ said Winifred, naming a famous firm. ‘ Certain shades are his secret.’

‘ How could she afford it ? ’ said Mrs. Champion. ‘ I thought she was poor.’

‘ Do not ask, dear Grace,’ said Winifred. ‘ The Clenches afford what is necessary. This is an occasion, I gather—and we ought to be grateful.’

‘ You dislike her,’ said Mrs. Champion, without hesitation.

‘ I own it. But I shall look at her with pleasure notwithstanding.’

‘ If you do ’—the thought moved in the depths of Mrs. Champion—‘ you are not a woman, Winifred. It is better to be a woman, and own it up.’

She snapped her fan, and walked off to be pleasant to Rosaline.

Harriet did not dance at first, for she was trying to gather courage to attack the Vicar, who had come without his wife. It was a dread determination, even for a Clench ; for the single look he had directed to her from his corner by the door was one of flat condemnation : of herself, her presence in public, and the blue dress.

Gervase Escreet, meanwhile, had told two men

in confidence that she danced divinely, and she was being stalked, though she knew it not, in her flitting from room to room. At last she was cornered by the master of the house, who wore his gayest smile and silkiest manner—as of a cat only waiting to be stroked, and entreating not to be patted.

‘The next waltz,’ murmured Gervase. ‘I have retained it.’

‘You shouldn’t then,’ said Harriet. ‘I hardly think I’m dancing.’

‘If you just put your hand here,’ said Gervase. ‘you will find yourself dancing without effort. The simplest thing.’

‘I want to speak to Mr. Grayling,’ said Harrie, half-laughing. ‘Really, Mr. Escreet, I have business.’

‘All the exertion of your business-power, which I know to my cost, will not stir those grave black legs.’

‘I do not propose to waltz with him,’ said Harrie. ‘I’ve no doubt he would be stiff.’

‘Stiffer than you can conceive,’ said Gervase, with meaning. ‘A man of rock, Harri-et. Little blue waves will try to crumble him in vain.’

Harrie sighed. ‘Well, I’ll have one dance,’ she said. ‘It’s such lovely music. But you will not keep me.’

Gervase merely smiled. Keeping people was not his difficulty, once he had them at arm’s length. He was a popular man, spoiled by life and all his surroundings. Any girl in the room, or woman either, would have been thankful for a dance with him ; but profiting by the smallness of the occasion,

and the position he claimed as a fogey, he had only danced once, and that with his own wife.

‘Aren’t you going to give our Thomas one?’ he said, as they came back down the room. ‘He’s looking at you hungrily.’

‘He’s too tall for me,’ said Harrie. Her voice was quiet, but she had a shock. There had been a feline quality in Mr. Escreet’s tone that she was swift to mark, and she wondered if he had discovered. He was clever, terribly; and she could not bear somehow that the gossip that was tearing at her own peace, should touch Tom.

However, the observation decided her as to further dancing. She loved the exercise as a born dancer must; but she saw on this occasion she had to forego it. She shortened the waltz with Mr. Escreet, to his indignation, and stopping near the door, slipped, with a little nod to him, round the curtains.

‘A wave,’ he thought again, for her movements were like water. He wondered he had never noticed his secretary was so graceful—and yet of course that brute Clench’s daughter was bound to be. Gervase remembered Brian for five minutes, and watched Winifred dancing with Tom, a curious smile on his face. It was mistaken of Harrie to cut short a waltz with such an epicure at its most exquisite moment, and if she had had a little more experience, she would have known it.

She made for the servants’ quarters as a sure retreat. As she passed the door of the retired little book-room under the staircase, she spied the Vicar

alone within, and that determined her. He was turning over a paper he had picked up, and it struck her that he looked singularly lonely and miserable—not at all such as the powerful pastor of an agricultural district should be. He was a cold man, she knew, and not liked, his wife having done all in making what reputation for benevolence he possessed. He frowned now, as though at his article, when he became conscious of the intruder; and she stopped just within the draped doorway, and enquired gently after Mrs. Grayling.

‘Nothing serious,’ he said, with a perfectly false manner. ‘She thought it wiser not to come out.’

‘Poor man,’ thought Harrie: and continued, advancing a little: ‘May I ask if Fräulein Lindt has decided to leave you?’

‘She has,’ said Mr. Grayling, turning his paper and guarding his frown. ‘Easily tempted away.’ He cleared his throat.

‘It is often now or never with these engagements,’ said Harriet. ‘I suppose she has seen the London manager, has she?’

‘She is to see him again this week, and intends to look for a lodging.’

‘You do not approve.’

‘I cannot encourage such rash proceedings. She is far safer with us.’

‘But if it is for her career——’ said Harrie. He made no answer, and plainly wished her gone.

‘Mr. Grayling,’ she said, her pale little face flushing. ‘I know Bertha’s leaving you suddenly will be awkward, and you have need down there of an extra hand. If you let me come to you, I will

do my best.' She broke short, for his black eyes were fixed on her over the lowered paper, with that dead, icy look she could not bear.

'You?' he said.

'I should be glad to help your wife,' she faltered. 'I should not ask more than Bertha is getting.'

'You are good-natured, Miss Clench,' said the Vicar slowly, in an indescribable tone. Her type was allowed that quality, it implied. 'You are good-natured, and—ahem—impulsive. You cannot really have reflected, to make such an offer.'

Harrie put her hand to her flushed cheek, for with all her courage, her heart was beating violently. The man had insulted her once, and might again: the look he fixed on her revived that blasting memory. Indeed, had she known it, her blue robe and delicate flush were not serving her, for she spoke to a worthy descendant of Puritans, whom bodily charm could only sour.

'I have not reflected too much,' she said in a shaking voice. 'Indeed, I do not dare, among the people here. I think their thoughts, and then I forget my own. . . . Mr. Grayling, I'm a girl, and I suppose I may have made mistakes.'

'Mistakes?' he echoed.

'People do not act as I expect,' said Harriet, 'and then I go wrong with them. I suppose I must blame my education.' Even now as she looked at him, she felt he was misunderstanding her phrases. Her mind could not speak to his. She dropped discussion, and grasped at the man in him.

'It's surely fair to tell me what is said,' she cried.

‘Ah—no doubt,’ said the Vicar, for this was a line he could understand.

The Rev. Frederick Grayling had few brains, but he considered himself honest, and made much of that quality in his moral teaching.

‘I may repeat to you,’ he said, taking on some professional tone, ‘that I am not going on idle supposition. I seldom do that. For what I know, as I told you before, I have the best of evidence, which I have spent some trouble in sifting.’

‘There is nothing more, then, but the last,’ said Miss Clench drily; and then, at his newly suspicious look, regretted it. ‘That day, if I remember, you only implied your charge, Mr. Grayling.’

‘The occasion chanced to be in public,’ said he, ‘and I thought it kinder.’

‘Kinder?’ She laughed, a very little. ‘The forms kindness takes, over here,’ she murmured. ‘Well, sir, I offer you my own evidence now, if that is of any use. It might improve matters—and it’s fair to give me the chance.’

The effect of the invitation she hardly gauged, and she could not avoid a start when he spoke.

‘You are not married?’ said Mr. Grayling.

‘No! How would I be married?’

‘I mean of course to that young man. You do not deny it is the same man who figures in the Fräulein’s story? Of course we have heard all that.’

‘It is the same,’ said Harrie. At least, she thought, she was out in the open now, and she almost thanked the man for his crudity.

‘You have sent money to him? More than once, perhaps.’

‘I have. Why not, when it is money I have earned?’

‘And you assert there is no illicit connection between you?’

‘None—but that we love one another.’ Her beautiful voice filled and quavered. For everything in the world she could not have helped saying it.

‘Miss Clench!’ He rose uncomfortably, turning half away. ‘I am not even of your church,’ he said, with a touch of gentlemanly spirit. ‘And you doubtless consider I have no right to examine you.’

‘I have given you the right—as a possible employer.’ She spoke steadily, trying desperately to see the thing through his eyes. ‘I ask you to remember,’ she said, keeping her eyes on his with a violent effort of will, ‘this boy you talk of is my own cousin, and orphaned of his parents. He has no belongings at all except my father and me.’

‘Your father, yes. The young man has led a respectable life?’

‘I cannot say, before I found him.’ Her hands were wrung together at the cruelty of it. Struggle which way she would, the entanglement of the Clench tradition of light living was about her. She began to see there could be no way out.

‘If you came into my family,’ said the Vicar in growing triumph, ‘can you promise this person would not molest you?’

‘How can I promise it?’ She gazed at him, and her grey-blue eyes were piteous. ‘I would do my best. Did I not begin by saying that? It is all that anyone can do.’

There was a pause.

'I fear,' he said coldly, 'it is impossible. I am sorry, Miss Clench, I cannot make you see how impossible it is.' He took up the paper again, his firm hand shaking a little.

Had she not felt so utterly battered by him, her flame of courage so slowly and completely stifled out, she would have observed that tell-tale wavering, and noticed the tone of his last words more closely, and known that her great effort and challenge to his honesty had had more effect on his slow mind than she thought. But Grayling was the least expressive type of man, and Clenches were accustomed to expression. He needed to go home, and think for hours, and defend his point of view angrily to his wife, and jerk about the study—before any particle of his opinion could change. She, on the other hand, took the dismissal as final, and the snub as complete. She turned about, and went slowly on her way, swinging with her lithe gait out of the curtained door—the curtain of which dropped thus on her last hope.

She felt wounded and miserable to the last degree ; even her pride was crushed, and the rebel spirit would not surge at call, to mock and make light of this last embodiment of her intangible foe. It must be repeated perhaps once more, to those who would condemn her retreat before all her weapons had been tried, after so short a brush with the central enemy—that Harriet was only eighteen.

The last shock of the day arrived and passed so swiftly, that she had no leisure till afterwards to

realise its full significance. Only when she sat panting in her own room, before her own table at midnight, and her revolted senses had calmed a little, could she begin to turn her mind on the occurrence.

Harrie had remained in retreat for most of the evening. Whenever she appeared, various men, including Mr. Escreet, pressed her for a dance, but she was too thoroughly out of spirits to accept further amusement. She listened to the music behind curtains; and once, when Gervase's Oxford friend was teasing her in her retreat, Tom Champion came and talked to her a little, routing the other man. She thanked him before he left her with a little hand, which he held in his firm grasp a minute, though without turning a glance upon her.

Towards midnight she escaped to the garden, having borrowed a dark cloak. For some time she was alone on the low wall of the rose-garden, enjoying the faint sweet scents of earth from the beds, for the season was late, the June buds had hardly broken, and rose-scents were not. Presently a ball-room couple came to Winifred's shed alongside. She heard scraps of their conversation, and recognised Gervase at his most foolish, brilliant, and engaging—the after-midnight manner he reserved for dances. He had Rosaline with him, but Rosaline was fetched soon after by a partner, and the master of the house strolled down among his roses, smoking and enjoying the night.

He recognised the little figure on the wall with a slight 'Ah!' of satisfaction, and sat down beside her. Harrie was vexed a trifle, for she had no

immediate wish for company. He talked idly for a period in his manner, and she hardly troubled to answer. He told her that Winifred had said she wished to leave them, and that he considered it very unkind—that she had made herself indispensable, that the boss was quite satisfied, and various other playful patronising things. Finally, still in the paternal manner, he put his arm about her as they sat together on the wall, and kissed her.

She was away from him in a minute, and facing him on the grass, a quivering little shape of fury.

‘If I didn’t strike you you should be glad!’ she said; and there was a blank pause in the darkness.

Then Gervase slowly awoke, out of the luxurious dream he had allowed himself. He had had not the least intention to arouse her, he had only pushed his cat-like quest of comfort a little too far.

‘Need I apologise?’ he said, laughing uncertainly. ‘Surely we are friends enough for that, Harri-et.’

Something in the use of the play-name at such a juncture maddened the girl.

‘You will call me by my name, if you please, sir,’ she said. ‘My name is Clench, you may have forgotten.’

‘You’re right: they all spit fire, the Clenches,’ said Gervase, but his languid tone was not natural. ‘Come now, calm yourself,’ he advised. ‘There’s taste to be thought of too. You are taking things too seriously.’

‘I believe that is a fault of mine,’ she said, still in the low furious tone. ‘My tastes are not yours,

nor my habits either. You have taught me that among you, and I thank you for it.'

'Come, come,' he murmured, still purring at her.

'I will thank you to speak no more,' she fired back. 'I have served you as I can, Mr. Escreet, and I offer you now my resignation. You will find someone else to complete your book and amuse you in odd times. I never thought it was the work for me, and now you have made me sure of it. I shall say no word to anybody, you can trust me, but I leave to-morrow early.'

'Harriet!' he cried, rising. He saw at last some measure at least of his mistake, and how he had injured her by his contemptuous treatment. When she rejected Farover, that home of all lofty delights, Gervase the proprietor saw it clear, and awoke from the midnight mood into daylight reason. By that new light, his proceeding towards her did not show so well.

'Harriet—wait,' he said, growing veritably anxious as he thought of Winifred. 'Good heavens, the little fool——'

For she was gone. Her shadow passed over the dewy grass, and budding roses, and flitted up the terrace, in under the secret silken curtains, and up the soft treacherous stairs. Music floated after her as she went; but she fled still, like a thing unworthy, through the fairy palace. It was not for her, indeed, any part of it. It was not real to her, it spoke no language she could follow, it held no people she could meet on common ground, or comprehend. It was all false, useless, vacant: essentially uncollectable.

She went to her room and thought about it for hours, head on hands, but with no tears. For the Clenches did not spend tears on such things as this, or on such people as Gervase Escreet.

Harriet left Farover the next morning. She had a short interview with Winifred in her room, explaining nothing of her reasons, though each woman understood the other perfectly. She left the address of a small hotel at Oxford, in case a letter came from Ann. Ann's return was uncertain in date, Rosaline had assured her; but, utterly vague as her future was, she had no idea but to await the return of that kind friend, for Rosaline herself had been asked to Risings for a visit of some days.

The kitchen alone regretted Miss Clench's going. Marion the cook wept exceedingly; John carried her box to the station with his own respectable hands; and Hester, whose weakness was not tears, accompanied her to the gate, in defiance of all habit and custom in Farover. But Hester's jaw was grimly set, and if Mrs. Escreet had met her so walking, it was not Hester who would have had the worst of the encounter.

'You've friends in Oxford, Miss Harrie,' she said anxiously.

'I shall have, when Miss Maskery comes home.'

'And when's that?' Then, at the girl's face, 'If I haven't a mind to come with you,' she cried.

'Nonsense, Hester: I shall be all right. Oxford is a good place to find teaching.'

'There's Mrs. Grayling—she's ill,' said Hester,

seeking vainly. 'There's that Miss Lindt, couldn't she go with you?'

'She is in London to-day,' said Harriet. 'I will write to her.'

'Miss Harriet—you'll excuse me—but if you've need of money——'

'I have not,' said Harrie, and lifted her blue eyes to the kind woman. 'Hester dear,' she said, putting her little hands on her shoulders, 'it's kindness itself you've been, since I came to Farover. But you mustn't vex yourself, for I've always made my way. I leave Farover where I started, that is all. It is not a place in which you can get forward at all, and so it is not for me. I am better out of it, and that's the fact. Good-bye.'

They kissed one another in the face of the august drive, and fine oaken gate.

'Good-bye,' whispered Harrie again when she was near, 'and I hope you will marry John.'

Hester went away blinking to the house, and rated Marion with asperity for being such a 'grizzling softy.'

An hour after Harriet's departure, the young groom Jimmie, from Risings, beautifully dressed and mounted, cantered up to the tradesmen's entrance. Jimmie was an old acquaintance, and both Marion and Hester came out to see what was afoot.

'Is that Miss Clench here?' quoth Jimmie in the undertone of secret service. 'It's a note.'

'She's gone an hour ago,' said Hester. 'What's to pay?'

‘Gone—not really gone?’ Jimmie’s face lengthened. ‘Mr. Tom’ll be vexed. I was to give it in her hands—very special.’

‘I never,’ said Marion, and looked at Hester.

‘Better hand it to Mrs. Escreet, eh?’ said Jimmie.

‘Naturally, silly,’ said Hester. ‘Give it here.’

She took the note with her best parlour air, and while Marion stroked the chestnut’s neck, and talked to his rider, she departed sedately through the servants’ hall.

To betray any lapse of a model parlour-maid is a sad responsibility; but it has to be confessed that, round the first corner that concealed her, Hester opened and read Mr. Tom Champion’s letter. Then, as her master was shut in the library and her mistress upstairs, she walked into the little study, enclosed the communication in a new envelope, stamped and addressed it. After which unheard-of proceeding, she marched out again and handed it up to the groom.

‘That’s to be posted at the station,’ said Hester. ‘Sharp and don’t forget. And you can tell Mr. Tom it’s all right. That’s all.’

‘What was it?’ said Marion curiously. ‘Did you gather?’

‘Only a message to Miss Ann, as he’s lost her address,’ said Hester cheerfully.

But Hester lied: for the communication was to let Harriet know, in the simplest, clearest terms, that Pat Morough was in the Oxford Infirmary, desperately ill: that he had sent a letter to Farover from London the preceding week: that wanting a

reply he had endeavoured himself to come to his little cousin ; but that his strength had failed utterly at Oxford, and he had dropped by the way. He still hoped, if she had any love left, she would forgive him.

PART III
HIMSELF

I

A TALL man stood at the conservatory entrance, about five o'clock in the afternoon, and enquired for Mrs. Escreet. He asked to see her, with his back to the light, but preferred to give no name. John hesitated, for the house was in disruption for the last week, and even before the occurrence of certain unfortunate events, he had had a terror of his mistress.

'Mr. Horn, sir,' said John, as he took the visitor's travelling coat, which was rich with costly fur. It was a brilliant idea on his part: for he knew a gentleman of that name was expected the next day, and gentlemen do make mistakes. He used the tone of respectful assertion, rather than interrogation, of the thoroughly well-trained manservant.

'Oh well, if you insist,' said the stranger affably.

It was comical behaviour: but Mr. Horn was said to be a literary gentleman, which accounts for some eccentricity. John rather wished, all the same, that he had let Hester come to the door: she had so much more readiness and savoir-faire at a crisis.

In the present crisis, John did what seemed his obvious duty, and announced Mr. Horn to Winifred, who was in her room, just arisen from her bed,

where she had somewhat prolonged her afternoon siesta.

‘Impossible,’ said Mrs. Escreet, turning from the glass, in which the eyes reflected were heavy and miserable. ‘Don’t say I have lost the days.’ She put a hand to her brow.

‘Friday, I believe, madam,’ said John, in his best manner, as though he would make it any other day to suit her convenience if necessary. He felt he was somehow to blame, for the occurrence if not for the date, as his mistress still stood for a moment, statue-like, in front of him.

‘Tell Marion,’ she said, ‘and your master just before the gong,’ and swept past him to the stairs. If he had not been a Farover servant, John would have respected her as a man for containing her natural bad language so admirably. He hastened off by way of the back stairs, to take counsel with his oracle, Hester, on the latest occurrence in the household.

Winifred passed into the drawing-room, hoping she looked better than she felt. The guest, however untimely, was a celebrity, and she must do the honours of her house to him, as befitted her high calling in the temple of taste. The room she entered was worthy enough of her professions, cool to a nicety, and fragrant from a bowl of roses and an open garden window: but rather dark, owing to the persiennes being lowered to exclude the afternoon sun.

‘I am so sorry——’ she had time to say, and then stopped short. ‘*Brian!*’

The man on the sofa had risen at her entrance, but as he did so, laughed the most delightful laugh, low and easy, as though years of happiness were stored in him, and now being sparingly let out.

‘I ask your pardon, Winifred,’ he said. ‘Your man was so sure about my name, I hadn’t the heart to undeceive him. And after all, what’s a name, granted your friends will remember it.’

‘What are you doing here?’ she said breathlessly. She still stood, like a statue now turned white.

‘Doing, is it? And to me? I’ve simply followed on my letter, if you must know, and come to find my girl. No harm, I thought, to see an old friend by the way.’

He was puzzled by her though, very evidently. He stared curiously, head down, like a watchful panther, through the shadow of the room.

‘My eyes are not quite what they were,’ he said as she still stood silent. ‘You’ll excuse a parent’s natural anxiety, Winifred. Is anything amiss?’

‘Brian—I am sorry.’ She gathered tone with an effort. ‘I am vexed to tell you indeed. Harriet has left us.’

‘Not here? Where is she, then?’

‘In Oxford, I believe.’

‘You believe?’ Clench laughed again. ‘Well, I did think you’d keep an eye on her for me. Didn’t think of me so soon, eh?’

‘She never had your letter. She cannot,’ cried Winifred, with gathering indignation, ‘or she must have told us. She would not have dared——’

Brian broke in. ‘I went to Versailles to find her,’

he said, slowly as though weighing his words. ' Sour faces on the women, and they send me on to the Post. I proceed to the Post, and the young female—not sour, I grant, but with the face God gave her—hands me out your address. I come to you, gladly as ever I was known to come, and here you pass me on again, with a face upon you, as I live, Winnie, no traveller could expect. Will you let me have an explanation ? '

He had one, longer and more passionate than he had bargained for. He took it, still watching panther-like, with his hands behind. Brian had Patrick's elegant proportions and lithe build, but greater stature, and far more dignity. The dignity, it is true, was a recent acquisition, for in Winifred's day he had been, like his nephew, a genial tramp. Somewhere on the hemisphere he had scoured, Brian had absorbed majesty, as necessary possibly to his years : more probably, as necessary to carry off a fur-coat, fine linen and well-cut clothes. As he stood before Mrs. Escreet, he might have been any New York man of fashion, except for two things. One was that lynx-like, brilliant gaze, in which, under grizzled eyebrows and narrowed lids, all the germs of his old madness lurked hidden. The other was a singularly dirty pocket-handkerchief, evidently used of late to clean a train-window, which was gaily protruding from his breast-pocket.

' Well, that's a story,' he said at last. ' That's a story.' He seemed to be admiring it as at least well-constructed, and neatly told. ' It appears I am to learn the girl before I see her, which is just as well. It's melancholy realising how a man's

family get's out of hand, and him not thinking of it. It was not to any giddy eminence that Madam raised my hopes at Versailles. Yet it would not be rivalry there,' said Brian thoughtfully, 'for she's not a well-favoured woman.'

The compliment thus clearly indicated to herself jarred Winifred.

"I never thought of rivalry," she said impatiently. 'How can you deliberately misread one, Brian?'

'Well, what's it to be called, then? At present I'm at sea, being shaky with long travelling upon it, as stands to reason. What do you complain of in her?'

'She is impertinent.' Then, as he shrugged—'And dishonest.'

'Has she taken the spoons?'

'Brian, if you can jest——' Her voice choked, and she turned aside. 'Go,' she said, 'I cannot speak of it—yet.'

'She's wretched, the poor creature,' said Brian—it seemed a soliloquy, spoken in a charming tone. He only saw her shoulders move in answer. 'Don't think I'm defending the girl,' he said; 'it's not right of her, on my honour, when you received her in your house. Only now she's gone from you, as I understand, so it will all come straight—it's sure to. I can inform you, who have had some experience. Since'—as her head sank lower—'it's the girl you blame entirely in the matter.'

'Him,' said Winifred, a cry torn out of her. 'I saw it in her eyes. Oh, how could he!'

'Ha!' said Brian serenely. 'Him, is it? Now didn't I always tell you he was a caterpillar?'

Mrs. Escreet turned at this as if she would have struck. 'Go,' she said, in a choked tone.

'And a grand woman like yourself,' pursued Brian regretfully. 'Not a day older, not so much as I am myself. My girl's nothing to look at, is she? Ill-bred and full of faults, as it appears.' He broke out. 'It's the taste I'm sorry for, Winifred. I did think, whatever his weaknesses, Gervase's taste was good.'

Again his efforts in consolation seemed to make no impression, for Mrs. Escreet stood before him, looking noble and distressed. Brian began to think it must be serious, and his face changed sympathetically on the thought. He also would be serious, he determined: and he sat down on the sofa, hands in pockets, stretching out his legs.

'Where's Gervase at present?' he asked, in the discreet tone of one who enquires of a family delinquent, or an invalid.

'In the library. He has been there all day.'

'Has he taken food?'

'I don't know,' said Winifred, moving irritably. 'I have had meals in my room.'

'Phew! that's bad.' He paused. 'Has he sent any flowers to you?'

'Oh,' she jerked, 'what does that matter?'

'Has he done so?' Brian pressed, with his narrowed, glinting eyes fixed upon her sidelong.

'He sent up some roses, yesterday, I think.'

'He's willing to be friends,' said Mr. Clench. 'And you there on your dignity, refusing them: cannot I see you at it? You look beautiful when you're stately, Winifred.'

'Pish!' she said, gazing from him with a frown. 'Do you never grow any older, Brian?' He swept her face with one keen glance, and smiled.

'You're not content with his remorse,' he suggested, leaning forward to take up the little brass poker from the empty grate. 'You want to punish him—ah, the soft sex always do.' He brandished the poker gently. 'Well, punish him, it's a simple thing. Give him something to make him remember you, and feel you matter also, in your way.'

'I cannot wrangle,' she said wearily. 'I cannot speak of it even, it is too degrading—base. I had sooner do nothing and——'

'And leave him to his reflections,' finished Brian. 'He's had a day of it, the poor man—six days is it?—well! The way I propose to myself, you'd have little to do, and it would spur his thinking'—he spurred with the poker—'not to say upset him from the high horse to your feet.'

'What do you mean?' she demanded, suddenly facing him, as though suspicious.

'Just drop the letters on the table before him,' said Brian, smiling at the poker. 'I must have them somewhere, put away.'

There was a very long pause in the exquisite room. Mr. Clench put the poker tidily down, and dusted his large fine hands on the disgraceful pocket-handkerchief.

'You coward,' said Winifred softly.

'You fool,' returned Brian, with equal delicacy of utterance. 'I never said as much to a woman before, though Heaven knows I have thought it often. He takes a little diversion in his old age,

when it's no more than yourself did as a newly-married girl. What harm when it goes no further, you'll say: well, it's thanks to me it did not. I never replied to your letters, Winifred, and indeed I may have lost some of them, travelling so long as I've been. But the moment you'd like me to look them out——'

'You brute!' She changed the word.

'Stop there,' said Clench, rising: and his massive dignity crushed hers. He shone, and threw her into the shade. In her hatred she knew he had never, even in his youth, been so magnificent.

'Keep that word to yourself, or I'll have to return it,' he said. 'For what treatment have you given to my poor little girl? Who's she got to care for her, ignorant and unmarried as she is, and the sport of every married man with some time on his hands, as yourself has been telling me? She's motherless, and alone, and you with no child to love might have had a heart for her, as I've been reflecting thankfully all the way. "Thank God, at least, it is Winifred," I said in my own remorse, when I discovered at last where she had strayed to. And now good night to Winifred, and the home that has found no place for the child, and I'm off alone to find her.'

'Wait,' the woman before him gasped. 'Let me explain.'

'No need,' he said, still standing with his head lowered to smile at her, and dusting his hands. 'It's on old times I am thinking, these last few minutes we're together. It was myself had the honour then, as my daughter has now, to disturb you. Well,

we're clearing out of it, and into a better country ; let that be your consolation. Double-quick time, I assure you, lest her warm heart be corrupted, with the me-owling that goes on about marriage in this worn old land. We're moving across, but we'd sooner leave no ill-will behind us. We'd sooner that. You go in, Winifred, and on your knees to him in one of those graceful attitudes, of which yourself holds the secret, and be nice to him, as such a cultivated, kind woman can be. He will meet you, for surely he's long been sorry, after this bewildering treatment from one he's used to see smiling. Kiss and make it up again ; and as for the dignity—there !'

With great grace Mr. Clench picked up a satin sofa-cushion, made as though to kick it like a football across the room, dropped it on the floor, blew through his fingers, flung his hands behind his back, and made her a profound and courtly bow. The single misfortune was, that the last part of this agile exhibition was performed in the company's rear ; for Mrs. Escreet walked out of the room

When she had quite gone, Mr. Clench relaxed his fine attitude, and performed a solemn solitary jig about the cushion on the floor.

'It's my own girl she is, when I'd hardly dared to think it,' he crowed to an audience of chairs. 'And me sitting there solemn like a bishop to preach at her !'

After that he departed, paralysing John in the entry by his sable coat, and mournful dignity.

II

MR. CLENCH, who was burdened merely with a bag, went first to his daughter's lodging, on his arrival in Oxford, and found that she had left it. Where she had gone they could not inform him, but she had departed several days since, with a gentleman who had come to fetch her. This piece of information did not seem to disturb Brian particularly, and he proceeded to make the round of the best hotels in Oxford to find a room, his face an inch longer as he emerged from each. Finally, avoiding the quarter of lesser hostelries, he came back to the first hotel he had tried, where he trusted—with really excessive optimism—that they might have forgotten him in the interval. On his way there, in the middle of Broad Street, he happened upon a short, broad person stamping angrily along in the opposite direction.

‘Gudgeon!’ he exclaimed, straddling in this person's path.

‘Clench!’ exclaimed the organist: and they shook hands vigorously as old acquaintance.

‘I've got a girl in the town,’ said Brian, without preamble and very loud. ‘Can you tell me where to find her?’

‘No, I can't,’ said Dr. Gudgeon. ‘You come along to the house, though, and see Horn. He might be able to help you.’

Brian took the offer as made, changed all his plans on the instant, and turning right-about-face, they tramped along gaily together.

Now, one collectable alone can perambulate the world with no more than a surprised eye fixed on him from time to time ; but when two collectables meet, their manner of conducting themselves, and the noise they make in a public thoroughfare, is apt to attract an admiring crowd to follow them. Small boys began to run in the rear of the couple of queer men—one so tall and well-dressed, the other so short and snuffy—whistling other small boys at every corner they passed to hasten to the spot, so that the attendant troop increased, and Brian had to swing round from time to time, and flick at the company with his cane.

‘ Who’s this Horn,’ he demanded, the stick laid across his shoulder, ‘ who I’m tumbling over at every step since I’ve come to England ? ’

‘ Where have you tumbled over him ? ’ said Gudgeon.

‘ I was on his tracks just lately at Farover.’

‘ He was to go there to-morrow,’ said Gudgeon. ‘ But I’ve a notion I shall persuade him to refuse. He has a quarrel with Winifred Escreet about the girl.’

‘ What girl ? ’ said Brian.

‘ Yours.’

‘ What’s Horn doing quarrelling about my girl ? Will he be the fellow who fetched her off ? ’

‘ You had better ask him,’ said Gudgeon, showing a prudence that one would not have suspected in him. ‘ I am out of the quarrel, of course : though

between ourselves, Clench, I think Winifred Escreet's a fool.'

'I shake your hand on it,' said Brian. 'I told her so just lately.'

'Did you now?' said Gudgeon with interest. 'Well, I came pretty near it—though, hang it, forms must be preserved. It's a good house to be in, and the cooking's a marvel.'

'I couldn't have stayed to dinner,' said Brian thoughtfully, 'I hardly could.' He paused in the roadway and sighed; then they tramped away again.

'At least, she's not so much a fool as blind,' said the Doctor, resuming suddenly. 'And not so much that either as deaf.'

'You don't say,' said Brian. 'I never noticed she was afflicted.'

'Well, look here: I picked out a magnificent pianiste from under her nose. I shouldn't wonder if I picked—by the way, I suppose you know your girl has a voice.'

'*H—what?*' vociferated Brian, stopping short, and so loud that four or five of Oxford's respectable citizens looked round with shocked expressions. Then, in the open end of Broad Street, where the book-shops are as full as bee-hives, and good young men and women walk back and forth to the libraries, he and Gudgeon solemnly shook hands.

'Not a doubt of it,' said the latter, proceeding. 'Though, acting by the light of nature only, she's placed it too low. It'll go up by strides when she gets in good hands. You wait and see.'

'Wait?' laughed Brian. 'Me?'

'I believe she's ill at present,' Gudgeon explained. 'But that will pass. Girls' illness always does.'

Brian agreed. He did not afford much of his paternal attention to the illness, though he thought over the voice for some minutes longer, with ejaculations in an undertone.

'What's her age?' he reflected aloud. 'My God, it's a blessing I came. And to think that little weasel might have detained me another year, but for a slice of luck I barely deserved.' He shook his head, pondering awe-struck at Fate's ways.

'I can't put you up for the night, by the way,' said the organist suddenly. 'My second room, the last visitor broke down the bed.'

'What for did you not have it put to rights?' said Mr. Clench, displeased. 'Here I've walked the whole town round for hours, trying to find something fit to sleep in. I've half a mind to go back to-night to New York.'

Dr. Gudgeon stopped in turn—their proceeding was irregular—and looked his companion up and down with his most formidable scowl.

'You've made a fortune, I suppose,' he snapped. 'You're a rich man, now, don't deny it.'

'I had to,' said Brian in apology. 'It was the first step, you see, to what I wanted, to make a pile. If you've ever seen a face, Gudgeon, looking out of a high window in a great gold house—a skyscraper—well! So I made the dollars necessary by giving all my attention to the matter, and it was not so hard as I'd always thought.'

'You generally found it simpler to borrow, didn't you?' said Dr. Gudgeon.

'I did,' said Brian. 'And by the same token I ought to have paid Gervase back. But he is such a caterpillar, my instinct was to avoid treading over him. I never gave thought to it, though it's true he could claim it of me.'

'Pay him,' growled Gudgeon, who was an honest man. 'Money's a curse altogether, but borrowed money's a hell.'

'I will, since you advise it,' said Brian. 'I have not found money a curse, though, I'll tell you, so long as I've tried it, which is a matter of five months. Doubtless I shall in time. How are you going?' he added politely.

'Low for the moment,' said Dr. Gudgeon. 'The table's poor. I told Horn he had better dine out a good deal, and he has taken me at my word. I shall go up again soon, when some lesson-fees come in—this is a cursed town for delaying. I've lent a lot of money to this woman I've found, to launch her; she's launched, though, now, and will do. Then I spent a lot more on a work of art in the spring—a bit of marble, which now Horn's trying to buy back from me.'

'I'll come and look on at the deal,' said Brian affably. 'What is the fellow like; you never told me.'

'Horn? Well, Horn is—Horn's not bad. He's rather a shilly-shally, I say: but the London public seems to like him.'

'Not a voice upon him?' queried Brian with a spark of interest.

'Not he; only a book or two, and a society play.'

'That's not bad,' said Brian, detaining Dr.

Gudgeon to consider the point. 'He'd be out of society, at least, to write it.'

'Out of it, as you say. Now society's trying to get him back.'

'I'd like to stop that,' said Brian, having thought again.

'You can if you like,' his acquaintance returned.

'What's that insinuation?' said Brian, and proceeded to reflect for some time, his stick across his shoulder. He did not expect Gudgeon to explain, for collectables rarely explain their insinuations, at least to one another. Suggestion, shadow, passing impression is the breath of their life, and they live among such, only bolting a solid fact when they must—in order to put it out of sight. For this reason, among others, they madden all sensible people.

On entering Gudgeon's library—which in its comfort and beautiful fittings belied his account of his own poverty—the host made a laudable endeavour to present his guests to one another. But the effort was quite useless, for there happened to be in the room that which interested Brian more than Horn. He marched straight to a side-table, which supported a white sculptured figure of a youth with a drooping head.

'By all the powers above, what's that?' he exclaimed.

'That the thing of which I told you,' said the collector, easily diverted from his duties. 'I bought it from Horn there for a song in Paris, while he was

distracted by his twopenny play last year. Now he has woken up, and wants it back.'

'Clap on the price and disappoint him,' advised Brian, as if the other party had not been in the room. 'It's far too good to lose, and it's Brian Clench who is telling you.'

'There you are,' said Gudgeon to Horn with a nod. He alluded not to the bargain, but the name, thus conveniently saving him the effort of an introduction.

'I had suspected it,' said Geoffry politely. 'How do you do, Mr. Clench? I heard a report you were in England.'

'You would, I dare say,' said Brian, pleased. 'You will be able to tell me, Gudgeon said. Has the little girl Harrie heard it too?'

'We hardly ventured to believe it,' said Geoffry, remaining grave. 'Though the poor boy did.'

'Which poor boy?'

'Your nephew, Patrick Morough—the sculptor of what you are touching.'

'Morough?' ejaculated Clench. He drew his hand from the marble as if it burnt him. 'Tell me where to go and see him.' He seized his coat.

'You can see his grave,' said Horn.

The man, drawing slowly up to his full height, dropped the coat again, and crossed himself mechanically.

'God rest him,' he said after an interval. 'Where did he die?'

'Here, in the hospital, three days since. We buried him to-day.'

'Horn,' cried Gudgeon, shouldering in, 'and you

never told me ! Before Heaven, I would have gone with you.' (For thus the collectables draw to their kind, without warning, or any help but the beautiful instinct that unites them, like the birds.)

' I could not speak of it,' said Geoffry, with perfect simplicity. ' I only speak of Pat now, to cry.'

' That is so,' said Brian. ' That is so.' Both he and Geoffry turned their backs for a moment, he fondling the suave lines of the cold marble with the large, delicate fingers of his left hand.

' All that is left of him,' he said, '—and her. Well !' Then he and Geoffry faced one another again, and no one regarded anyone's wet eyes.

' Was Harrie with you at the funeral ? ' he said.

' She was. She insisted against advice, though it broke her down. I saw her safe home afterwards, and there's a woman with her there.'

' She was right,' said Brian nodding. ' Quite right to go. I could have wished one of us to be there.' He spoke consciously as the head of the clan ; then turned to the lesser business. ' So you know where she is, Horn. You have all the information ? '

' I can tell you most of it, I believe. Indeed, I should prefer to, to save your daughter.'

' Sit down,' said Gudgeon suddenly. ' Brian, I'm going off to see about your bed. The fools must be able to mend it.' With which ridiculous plea, betraying the most perfect consideration, the host vanished in a lurch from the room.

Geoffry Horn and Brian sat down and talked ; and really, considering Horn's essential uncollectability, the sudden intimacy they struck up was

creditable. They had, of course, to start with, a common interest and a common sorrow, which things make for intimacy even with ordinary mortals. But beyond that, they liked one another. Brian was a breath of wider air to Horn, whose late life in town had alarmed and disgusted him, for he had not foreseen the necessity of acting the lion after his long retreat, and among the very society he had been satirising. For Brian, on the other hand, Horn escaped all danger of being a caterpillar, owing to the facts of his having seen Patrick Morough buried, and bought his work. The fact that he had written a successful play into the bargain stood in the background, not unregarded, but rather pushed aside by these more necessary things.

In talk, Brian appeared scarcely to attend to Horn's careful list of dates and occurrences, not bearing directly on Harrie, but all concerned with her. Yet it later appeared that he had mastered them perfectly, and with Harrie herself he made eventually very few mistakes.

'It seems to me you came late on the scene,' he observed, in one of his flashes of keenness.

'I could not leave the last rehearsals,' said Horn, running his fingers through his hair, as though in remembered distraction. 'If she had told me half——! On the first night I let the confounded thing go to the devil its own way, and came. I had sent my housekeeper before me, as soon as I realised Miss Clench was here alone. But that was late, of course, considering how things were.'

'Was it news of the boy brought her from Far-over?'

'No, she did not even hear of it till she was here at the hotel. Then she went to the hospital at night, and they would not admit her.'

'Was she alone?' snapped Brian.

'The first time—to my sorrow I confess it. The second time an admirable woman came in to go with her: the Vicar's wife from Stackfield parish.'

'Harrie friends with a Vicar's wife?'

'She quarrelled with her husband to come, so I understood from Miss Clench; and she is mortally ill herself,' added Geoffry.

'Name?' demanded Brian, with the collector's eye.

'I have forgotten it. You must ask her.'

'How did she hear of the need?'

'Some maid from Farover came to tell her. It seems all the servants there love Harrie.' Geoffry bit his lip suddenly, but the excellent father opposite noticed nothing. Mr. Clench was engaged in pondering on his recollections of John, the Escree's manservant.

'No doubt I did the young fellow injustice,' he said to himself. 'Well, on my honour, it makes Winifred's part in it look worse.'

Geoffry's face altered at Mrs. Escreet's name. He was a capable detective, when he was once on the trail; and he had by this time more than an inkling of the history of Pat's missing letter. Harriet herself had been too overborne by distress at the news Tom Champion sent her to show any curiosity as to the fate of this all-important missive, which must

have arrived and vanished on the Wednesday of the Iffley picnic. A scrawled line from Hester on Tom's sheet mentioned the fact of its arrival, which Harrie had overlooked or failed to read. What became of it, since it never reached her hands, remained open to conjecture, and it was not till later that Horn swept up some more small but salient facts in the evidence : as that on the day in question, Harrie had in the morning opened by mistake a letter of his to Mrs. Escreet, and that Mrs. Escreet received the Vicar at tea the same afternoon. He was not, however, without strong suspicions at the present time : and a feeling rankled in him towards his proximate hostess, the quality of which argued ill for her chances of receiving him. He began, during the pause in the conversation, while he teased his beard with his long fingers, to think out the phrases of a note of excuse, which should be sufficiently courtly without committing himself to any appearance of backwardness in his Vanessa's cause. He spoke no word, however, of all these ideas to Brian, who, as he had understood from Gudgeon, was himself the old friend of the mistress of Farover.

' Well, then,' said Brian at last, rousing from a train of his own thoughts, which had drawn his grizzled brows together, ' by one means or another, Horn, my girl saw Kathleen's boy before his end ? '

Geoffrey shook his head. ' He was too hopelessly ill by then to make it possible. A week earlier she might have managed it. They picked the poor fellow up on the station road in a dying condition, the doctor told me. He had walked most of the

way from London, according to his own account ; and indeed it was clear, for his boots were quite worn through.'

' Poor lad, poor lad. . . . And me nearly home by then, with all this money upon me.' (It never came to Pat's uncle's mind, that some of the money was Pat's.)

' Fortunately,' said Geoffry, ' he was found by good people, and wanted for nothing after that. And his death was quiet, as I know.'

' You were there ? '

' I was with him the last night, when he had a short period of consciousness. Miss Clench had been tired out, waiting about all day, and it was not worth while then to disturb her. I was glad, however, to be there.'

' I am glad of it,' said Brian, ' wanting myself or her. Did he speak any words that were sensible ? '

' A message for your daughter, which I wrote at his dictation.'

' Yes, yes. Then they were known to each other. They had been together at least, before this time we speak of.'

' So much as was possible,' said Geoffry, ' they had.' Saying it, his deep-set eyes studied Brian sadly. Of course, in the world as this man saw it, the little cousins might have lived together all the time, and never a thought of harm, since both were Clenches. Geoffry granted him his world, with all its pretty properties of moonlight and haycocks ; but he kept his own more sober mansions, and longed for them to shelter Harrie. It was for her

peace, not his own, he was contending consciously in every word he spoke.

‘I am glad of that,’ said Brian. ‘I am glad of that.’ After an interval he rose and took the lamp in hand, to study once more the work of Kathleen’s son. When he was far, Geoffry said :

‘Will you visit her to-night, Mr. Clench?’

‘No, no,’ said Brian absently. ‘Let her sleep in peace, with her little maiden dreams.’ He spoke the soft accents of Irish a moment, quoting poetry with sunk head. ‘To think,’ he said presently, ‘I should have gone through two worlds to find the woman fit to mount a horse with me; and here’s my own girl riding as if she’d been born to it, and all alone.’

‘Pat used to speak of the horse,’ said Geoffry, who had risen too, and followed him, as though drawn by the same charm : a remembered charm it was, too, for this marble boy was the very Patrick, modelled, as Geoffry knew, upon his image, and poignantly expressing a familiar mood.

‘He’ll not have found his horse, the poor lad,’ said Brian, studying the exiled Cupid’s drooping head.

‘He said he had not, in the message to Miss Clench I mentioned.’

‘He’d be loving her,’ said Brian, with sure divination of his own kind. ‘I’m loving her too in advance, because of him. Well, well, horse or none, I wish I could have known him.’

He sighed heavily, an old man for the moment. Not till Gudgeon came back, to bring the news that the bed had been successfully mended, was Mr. Brian Clench himself again.

III

HARRIET was living in the tiny rooms which Geoffry had found for her off High Street : to the occupation of which she had only been persuaded with infinite difficulty, and which no subsequent suggestion of better quarters could tempt her to leave. She had clung in the beginning to her wretched little hotel lodging, with an obstinacy that defeated all the wiles of Madame Rochette, commissioned by her master to detach her ; and when Mr. Horn himself followed his envoy to Oxford, he found the good woman in a state of elaborate despair.

‘ Mademoiselle makes her economies, monsieur,’ wailed Madame Rochette, ‘ and not one of monsieur’s messages, which I delivered faithfully, will turn her from them.’ Yet for all her fair words, Mr. Horn suspected his housekeeper of faithlessness in his cause, for if Madame had a private passion herself, it was for the smaller saving, and her heart applauded Miss Clench’s prudence while her tongue condemned her wilfulness. Madame Rochette, for all her comfortable bulk and cheery presence, was far-sighted, would not trust fortune a grain, and was mildly cynical about those who did. She never countenanced spendthrift ways. Geoffry had long had reason to believe that even while she devised

and dressed feasts for him in the Paris days, she lived happily on parings and scrapings herself. When pressed by him too closely on the subject of these tricks to save his purse, she was wont to become portentously gloomy, shelter herself behind a mythical doctor in her native town, and allude to the scanty diet as her 'régime.' A stock of further medical details remained at call, should she be forced to resort to them ; but this battery needed rarely to be used, for her shy master's curiosity was easily satisfied ; and he preferred to let her starve according to her tastes, rather than pursue the enquiry further.

However, in the end, since the new rooms were near, and not much more costly than the burrow she had chosen first, Harriet was persuaded to make the change ; and when Mr. Horn still showed himself discontented with the result attained, Madame Rochette made a sudden stand, faced about and joined the enemy. She found things to her taste in the stuffy eighteenth-century house, which happened to have faded furniture in the 'Styles' to which she was accustomed, and in which one back room possessed a comfortable wide hob for cooking. Having made this last discovery, without delay she abandoned Geoffry to his fate at the hotel, and establishing herself under the same roof with Miss Clench, soon made friends with its proprietor. Once that was done, all was accomplished. Madame was self-appointed as dictator, in all matters relating to Harrie's table. Each morning she issued on the surprised Oxford world, at an hour when their eyes were hardly open ; and bare-

headed, her bulky basket on her arm, she ravaged the stalls of the covered market. Having few English words, her method was to seize a cream-cheese, or a bunch of asparagus, stow it in her basket, and count down heavy pence on the edge of the market-stall, until the indignant owner was satisfied. Her discrimination was terrible, and she never came twice to a stall which supplied her with a bad article. Returning home to her charge, she brought with her in the basket the wherewithal to prepare perfect meals : in the kitchen for courtesy's sake, but by preference in her own quarters, on the bedroom hob. The landlady, gaping suspiciously at first over her doings, showed growing respect as the results of them came to light ; and the fame of Madame Rochette went forth by degrees, whispered through the agency of tradesmen to the neighbouring kitchens, so that the back premises of High Street stood amazed.

It was to these restricted quarters, the scene of her culinary conquests, that the good woman brought Harrie back after the funeral, almost ill with fatigue and grief. Without Madame Rochette and her motherly cares, she would probably have collapsed altogether, for her nerves had been slowly unstrung by that dragging week of trouble. But there was something strangely comforting in the French-woman's genial compassion, above all in her manner of treating Pat's death as a family loss, not peculiar to Harrie, but common to them all. The suspicion and curiosity that had tormented the girl so long were entirely absent from her consolations : owing no doubt in part to her having herself fallen under

the charm of the 'cher petit,' as she called Patrick, in Paris ; but also to a valiant faith in her master's power, and to that fine discernment in matters of the heart which the French middle ranks possess, and which none but the Irish middle ranks can equal.

Harrie was still under her capable charge and close surveillance when Brian found her the next morning ; languid still, her soft eyes shadowed by a night of grief, but sufficiently recovered to eclipse herself in a large apron, and assist Madame Rochette in the housework.

'Voilà Monsieur votre Papa, chérie,' said Madame Rochette, and let the large man in suddenly upon her charge : then she retired to her cooking with strenuous pursed lips, and a number of contented little nods. It was a good morning evidently : she had made several surprising bargains at an early hour while the carts were unloading, her chérie had been singing again, and Mr. Clench's appearance pleased her. The dinner must be worthy of these happy events, and she set to work.

It is not our intention to talk at length of the meeting of Harriet and Brian, on the morrow of Patrick's funeral. We give just so much indication of its setting, and leave the couple there, until the moment when Mr. Horn came in, to find Miss Clench upon her father's knee, her fair head dishevelled against his shoulder, and her large apron crumpled by the constriction of his other arm. She was still pale exceedingly, but her eyes were serene as they lifted to Geoffry's, and as for Brian, he was beaming foolishly. Harrie had of course talked of Geoffry a little—discreetly ; only Mr.

Clench at the moment had not paid much attention, and he showed marked jealousy of the other man when he appeared.

‘We’re talking French, Horn,’ he observed, ‘and we’ve not finished. You would like a little walk around the colleges till lunch-time, I shouldn’t wonder.’

‘I have seen the colleges,’ said Geoffry, blushing. ‘And I talk French very well ; and it’s lunch-time already—according to the canons of Madame Rochette. I just came to tell you.’

‘Can’t she go to the devil?’ enquired Brian.

‘Not with the omelette upon her,’ said Harriet. ‘The climate would frizzle it, and you know you’d be sorry, Brian.’

Mr. Clench smiled, still in a perfectly foolish fashion, stroking her hair.

‘The voice of her,’ he murmured, ‘and me all this time stravaguing after another girl.’

‘What about the other girl?’ said Harriet demurely. ‘To be sure I have never enquired after her.’

‘I told old Gudgeon the story lately,’ said Brian, unashamed. ‘You shall have it also if you will, darling, thought it’s a sad tale, on my honour. You must know how she lived, this girl, in a tall gold house, quite at the top of it : and Brian Clench came riding by in the New York street among the cabs, and saw her away up there. Well ; and so he had to make some gold stairs to get to her, and he made them one by one, until (and it’s the truth I’m telling you, so keep that dimple till it’s wanted) he got very nearly to the top.’

‘Didn’t she come down to him at all?’ said Harriet.

‘She did not, the little vixen, for her reasons; though she nodded and seemed agreeable to his climbing. And then, one black day of fate, he heard her speak to her sister out upon the stairs.’

‘Well, and then?’ said his daughter.

‘Nothing then—except she spoke through her nose.’

Both the auditors laughed at his rueful face.

‘And all the while,’ said Brian, seizing the girl, ‘here was the nicest little darling, with a voice like the first thrush of April, waiting for me unbeknown; mine entirely, is she not?—without any of the trouble of working for her.’ He looked her up and down a minute with his keen loving eyes, reviewing every part of her, every curl of her pretty hair, her plain black dress, worn shoes and capable hands. ‘What money have you of your own, I’m wondering,’ he enquired.

‘Little,’ she admitted, ‘but I will make some soon. I have seen a teacher here about pupils for French—Mr. Horn gave me a letter for him. They have always said that I taught well, and England is better at paying you than France.’

‘Then I’ll not have to work for you,’ said Brian.

‘I’ll manage for the two,’ said Harrie, confidently, clasping a small hand round his beard. ‘If you will stay by me, Brian, and not go far.’

‘But it’s far, I must be going, me dear, and that’s the trouble.’

‘Far?’ Her brow knit slowly. ‘And in which direction now?’

'West—where else? And then West of that again.'

'To Ireland?' she cried softly. 'Not further than Ireland, Brian?'

He nodded with gravity, though still his marvellous eyes twinkled between their narrowed lids.

'I had hoped to have you here,' she said, steadying her voice, 'in this nice little house. I've been planning it while you talked. There's another room we could have, when Madame Rochette goes to London—and it's not expensive.'

'I doubt if I can do it,' said Brian, running his disengaged hand in his pocket. 'Would Horn there lend us some to start with?'

'No, no,' she said alarmed, and seized his beard again. 'You are not meaning it, surely.'

'Well, wouldn't he lend you some if you asked him?'

'No, he would not. He would *not*, Brian. Do not listen to him.'

'Isn't she a jewel?' said Brian softly, to Horn for want of better audience. 'Well, if he's such a hard man, darling, he need not be about. We don't require him round any longer, I suppose. Or must we keep him a little for Patrick's sake?'

'Yes, yes: for a little. You must not hurt him. He has been Patrick's truest friend.' Her tears ran over suddenly.

'And yours?'

'And mine. Oh, why am I crying?—I do not know. It is since yesterday,' she gasped, hiding her face with both hands, 'that I have been like this.'

Mr. Horn turned from where he stood by the window, and went suddenly out of the room, to scold Madame Rochette about delaying the dinner. He could bear much, and had borne ; and he was certain now her future was safe, and her father only teasing ; but for all that, he could not bear to see the bravest of the Clenches cry.

Of course, the conspiracy to deceive her could not be kept up : no joke of Brian's ever could. After the simple lunch—which it is true would have been hard to better—they had the most wonderful dinner the best restaurant of the town could provide in the evening ; and Geoffry was carefully not asked to it : and Harrie, still in her black dress, for she would not change it, was spoilt to her father's heart's content, and shown off with a swagger to all the hôtel afterwards. The next evening Dr. Gudgeon invited them in state to a dinner of four, for which Brian insisted the blue dress must be worn ; and after dinner she sang them the whole of the Orpheus scene she had studied with Bertha, and Mr. Clench left his accompanying completely at the most critical point, and flung the music on the floor, and wrung the other musician by the hand, and whirled about a chair, and absolutely cried with rapture. Mr. Horn and his host were rather anxious about him, but Miss Clench reassured them ; observing that she remembered it very well of old, when new ladies sang to him ; and it had often happened like that. She seemed capable of calming him by an application of brisk good sense, such as she remembered her mother using. Whereupon

Brian flung a sofa-cushion at her, and gradually recovered ; but only to sit on a sofa and prophesy great things which no one singer could possibly ever accomplish—not to mention a series of teachers to which no one income could ever rise.

His daughter smiled at Geoffry ; and leaning sidelong in a deep chair with one foot curled under her, and a hand clasping her ankle, she talked low to Dr. Gudgeon, and took his sane advice. There was some remote person in a small German town that Dr. Gudgeon swore by ; but he admitted on pressure that the continent of America might contain as good, especially since an Italian lady of world-wide renown had just gone out.

‘ It’s not opera,’ observed Harriet at this juncture. ‘ Nor ever will be.’

‘ It’s opera,’ Brian shouted, leaping up, ‘ and you’ll shut your impudent mouth.’

‘ My dear Brian,’ she said, ‘ do look at me.’ Mr. Clench looked readily. ‘ How big do you suppose I’d appear on a stage ? ’ said Harriet.

‘ As big as you want to be,’ said Brian greatly vexed. ‘ You’d have to act it, as plenty have done before you. You’re none of my daughter, anyway, to be so small. You can walk, can’t you, and you can wear your clothes ; and there’s money behind you—*money*. Well ! ’ He barked at her, arms akimbo, for, after all his reckless expenditure, he still had a slight fear she did not believe it.

‘ There are things,’ said Harriet, ‘ your money cannot do, dear Brian. And one is to make me

larger than nature did—and the other is to make me do what I don't care to.'

And, indeed, Mr. Clench had soon to discover in life that it was so.

It was Brian, of course, not Geoffry, who 'dealt' for Patrick's Cupid, and he did not have to haggle with the owner. But, as he instantly gave Cupid to Harrie, a difficulty presented itself. They could not take the heavy thing to Ireland, still less to America, and they had nowhere in England to store it safely. Dr. Gudgeon generously offered to let it stand where it was, until they next happened to be coming that way; and Brian, who trusted and liked him considerably, might have closed; but Harriet, they found, had another idea.

'I am going to lend him,' she said of Cupid. 'And it's according to circumstances—which I will judge of, Brian—whether I ever take him back. You can look at him well these three days, do you hear?—before we go up to London.'

Thus, the three days and some others having passed, Cupid's next appearance on the world was in Bertha's little flat at Kensington. Harriet found that Brian—'hurrying West,' as he assured all his acquaintance—had allowed a couple of weeks in London in which to enjoy himself, and waste money on his daughter. She spent the first week dutifully over pieces of necessary business, of which three may be mentioned as example: to meet Ann Maskery, who had come up to town, during a pause of Tom's by-election preparations, to choose the more solid part of her sister's trousseau, with the

skilled assistance of her friend ; to be taken in state to see Geoffry's play, which now, with the aid of a clever actress, had settled into shape, and was ' running ' gaily ; and—hardest task of all—to keep Brian from making violent love to Miss Bridgnorth, Vanessa's charming interpreter, whom they entertained afterwards at supper, and who offered Harrie some useful and most kindly hints to smooth rough corners in the life before her.

But, necessary business being accomplished, the second week Miss Clench faced her father's fury with quietness, and abandoned him entirely for the plain woman Bertha Lindt.

The pair of old friends talked much during the days they had together, and Harrie learnt of Bertha's marked success in her first little trial concert, and how Dr. Gudgeon had already found her several pupils, and would recommend her more, and how she had a good engagement for the autumn, thanks to his influence with an important musical agency. She learnt of the Graylings, too, and Muriel, who had suddenly determined on her own account to go to school, much to the relief of all the neighbourhood ; and she enquired of Muriel's mother, the answer to which was a gentle shake of head.

But finally and chiefly, they spoke of the dead Patrick in the manner in which true friends can : and it was to Bertha's eyes alone that Harrie showed the boy's last letter before she tore it up. The brave, collectable Bertha wept over it—tears that were purely generous to the girl that Patrick loved.

‘ My Love—My Little Darling ’—so it ran :

‘ Horn tells me you are not to come, but himself is soon to be with you. (It is heaven’s justice to you, and so I know that it is true.) I will not send a message, but write this by Horn’s hand. It is better I should go out, if Brian is there to take my place. I hope still to see himself, if all the saints are good. If not, say that my love is his and yours, and I would have found the horse to ride and win you—only I had not time. Harrie, I will die blessing you for that kiss in the windy road. . . .’

‘ And whom are you to marry ? ’ Bertha whispered in French at parting, on the eve of her last day.

‘ I think I am to marry Mr. Horn,’ Harriet whispered back. ‘ He will tell me out there in Ireland, I shouldn’t wonder.’

There is a district (west of the west) in Donegal, and I offer the place freely to those who can find it by description. It has three levels of coast, mighty cliffs, against which the Atlantic throws its whole force furiously, day and night—gentle rocks, on which the cormorants climb in sunny weather ; and, if you patiently pursue to the north a little further, an agreeable bay of flat yellow sand. A small way out in the bay there is an island, where once a saint bathed his feet, and left behind him a healing holy well. Twice a day, and for twenty minutes, this sacred place is attainable from the land, for the sea in retreating leaves a straight path of sand uncovered, on which prudent pilgrims can walk. But

pilgrims must be prompt, and are advised to go barefoot, and not even then to delay too long on the island, whether they wish to ask a blessing at the well, or to leave the customary offering of a crooked pin upon it. (There is no trouble in procuring these, as pins are all crooked in Ireland.) If they allow themselves to be distracted, whether by piety or other things, pilgrims in returning will certainly get wet.

People do get distracted in such places, as the pilgrims we are concerned with found ; but though one got wet in the skirts returning, because she refused to be carried, they had accomplished all they needed. For it was on this remote islet, west of the west, that Mr. Horn 'told' Harriet between the tides ; and for such healing of all their sorrows, they each left a pin—fine straight ones that Miss Clench provided—upon the kind saint's well.

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD,
PLYMOUTH

[Spring, 1912

Sidgwick & Jackson's Fiction

"A firm which is establishing a reputation for insight into the value of works sent for their consideration."—*Manchester Guardian*.

ETHEL SIDGWICK

Le Gentleman : An Idyll of the Quarter (*Second Impression.*) 6s.

"In reviewing Ethel Sidgwick's first novel, 'Promise,' we expressed the opinion that she possesses the true imaginative gift, as distinguished from the mere power of vivid reporting, which is the necessary qualification for continuing to produce work of permanent value in fiction. It is a pleasure to find the same fine qualities in her new book, 'Le Gentleman.'"—*Times Literary Supplement*.

"'Promise' was a work which lived up to its name. Its successor fulfils it."—*Morning Leader*.

Promise. (*Second Impression.*) 6s.

"The anxiety felt by the experienced reader as to whether a book that opens so well will continue on the same level, soon merges into the rare enjoyment that is consequent on a growing belief in the writer's grasp not only of her subject but of her medium. Starting on a note of pleasant satire which makes the first page interesting at once, Miss Sidgwick gradually reveals a power of characterisation, an excellent gift for dialogue, and an astonishing economy in selecting incidents, qualities which are usually only attained by novelists after many volumes and some failures. All this, however, would be of small account if it were not for the emotional quality of the work, strongly restrained for the most part, but rising to a high pitch in the concluding chapters. . . . One of the most remarkable novels of recent years."—*Westminster Gazette*.

"A striking and very sincere and original novel."

Evening Standard.

NEW FICTION

Crown 8vo. 6s.

J. D. Beresford . A Candidate for Truth

A new work by Mr. Beresford, whose first two novels (see opposite) were received with such extraordinary praise last year, cannot fail to interest many readers; and the publishers believe this novel will establish his reputation beyond dispute.

Johan Bojer . . . Treacherous Ground

A story from the Norwegian of the author of **The Power of a Lie**, which had a remarkable success a few years ago, and was crowned by the French Academy in 1908.

Wilfred Hemery . The Woman Wonderful

A novel, by a new writer, of contemporary life in an up-country "dorp" in South Africa, giving a very realistic picture of local social relations between English and Dutch in Cape Colony since peace was made.

E. E. Towgood . . The Goal of Fortune

"We may certainly congratulate her on having at once established a claim to attention."—*Times*.

"An extremely promising first novel."—*Athenæum*.

"Well-written, amusing, and sympathetic."—*Morning Post*.

"Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson are again to be congratulated on a discovery."—*Liverpool Courier*.

Rosalind Murray . . Moonseed (3s. 6d.)

"'Moonseed' is extremely clever."—*Spectator*.

"Miss Murray is a writer of exceptional promise."—*Daily News*.

"A remarkable achievement of the novelist's art."—*Times*.

Sidgwick & Jackson's Fiction

J. D. BERESFORD

Author of

The Early History of JACOB STAHL 6s.

(Published in March, 1911)

AND

THE HAMPDENSHIRE WONDER 6s.

(Published in July, 1911)

"In these two volumes Mr. Beresford, a name new to fiction, reveals himself as a man who has something to say very distinct and different from the ordinary rut of novelists, something that amounts almost to a message. . . . Admirable characterisation throughout shows the author to be an observer of exceptional perception. . . . Mr. Beresford sees life truthfully, and writes truthfully. He knows the world he writes about. He has cut out a new road. **We have a new writer, and, judging from these two excellent novels, one who should make for himself a proud name.**"—*The English Review*.

JACOB STAHL

"There is another Richmond in Mr. Arnold Bennett's field, for 'Jacob Stahl' goes by rights side by side on the shelf with 'The Old Wives' Tale' and 'Clayhanger.'"

Bookman.

THE HAMPDENSHIRE WONDER

"A novel which in point of originality, both of conception and execution, is **the most remarkable that has been published for some time.** . . . A wonderful effort of vision and imagination. **It is a book that counts.**"

Morning Post.

Sidgwick & Jackson's Fiction

E. M. FORSTER

(Author of 'HOWARDS END,' etc.)

THE CELESTIAL OMNIBUS : And Other Stories.

Imp. 16mo. 3s. 6d. net. [Second Impression

"We would wish that everybody might know 'The Celestial Omnibus,' and let Mr. Forster drive him to the journey's end. For Mr. Forster is also one of the drivers in the service of the company."

Observer.

MONICA MOORE

THE STORY OF ROSALIND. Retold from her Diary.

Square 8vo, cloth, 3s. net; paper wrappers, 2s. 6d. net.

"We trust that a large public will ask for this book, or perhaps we ought to call it booklet, as it is published at less than half the usual price of a novel. It is a beautiful study of personality, the central figure, as maid, wife, and mother, revealing the difficulty experienced in shaping an extraordinary vitality to the service of common life and subordinating the passions."—*The Athenæum.*

NOVELS BY GEORGE GISSING

THE WHIRLPOOL
THE UNCLASSED
EVE'S RANSOM
IN THE YEAR OF
JUBILEE

THE ODD WOMEN
THE EMANCIPATED
DENZIL QUARRIER
HUMAN ODDS & ENDS :
Stories and Sketches

Crown 8vo. Uniform re-issue, 2s. net each.

"If we may guess at the destiny of this new edition, we can imagine that it will find its way to houses where very few novels are kept. Ordinary cultivated people will buy them of course; but also governesses who scarcely ever read; mechanics; working men who despise novels; dons who place him high among writers of English prose; professional men; the daughters of farmers in the North."

Times Literary Supplement.

SIDGWICK & JACKSON Ltd. 3 Adam Street London W.C.

PR
6037
I35H4

Sidgwick, Ethel
Herself

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
